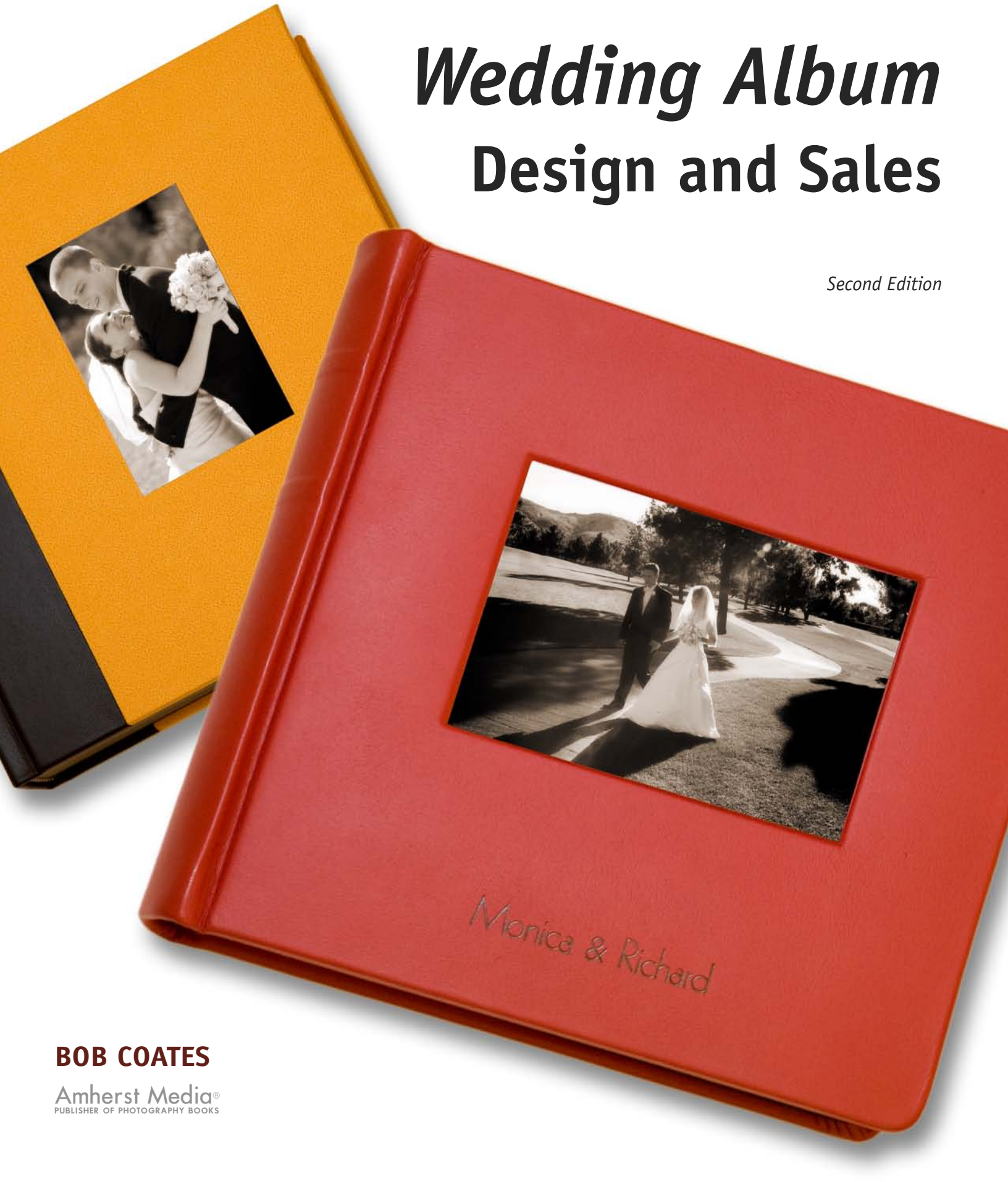
PHOTOGRAPHER'S GUIDE TO

Wedding Album Design and Sales

Second Edition



BOB COATES

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION 6
Album Production 6
Album Design 9
About This Book 9

1. AMANDA SUDIMACK 10
Film or Digital? 10
Image Editing 10
Album Design 11
Album Types and Production 13
Additional Album Opportunities 15
Selling Albums 15
Final Thoughts 16

2. YERVANT 17
Marketing and Customer Service 17
Engagement Portraits 18
The Wedding Day 19
Workflow 20
Pricing 21
Album Design 21
Album Production 23
Final Thoughts 23

3. ANDY AND BRIAN MARCUS 24
Marketing and Customer Service 24
Pricing 25
The Wedding Day 25
Delivering the Images 28
Album Design and Production 29
Final Thoughts 29

4. BOB COATES 30
Marketing 30
Consultations 30
Pricing 31
Working with an Assistant 31
Workflow 33
Album Design 33
Album Production 34
Final Thoughts 35

Images and design by Yervant.

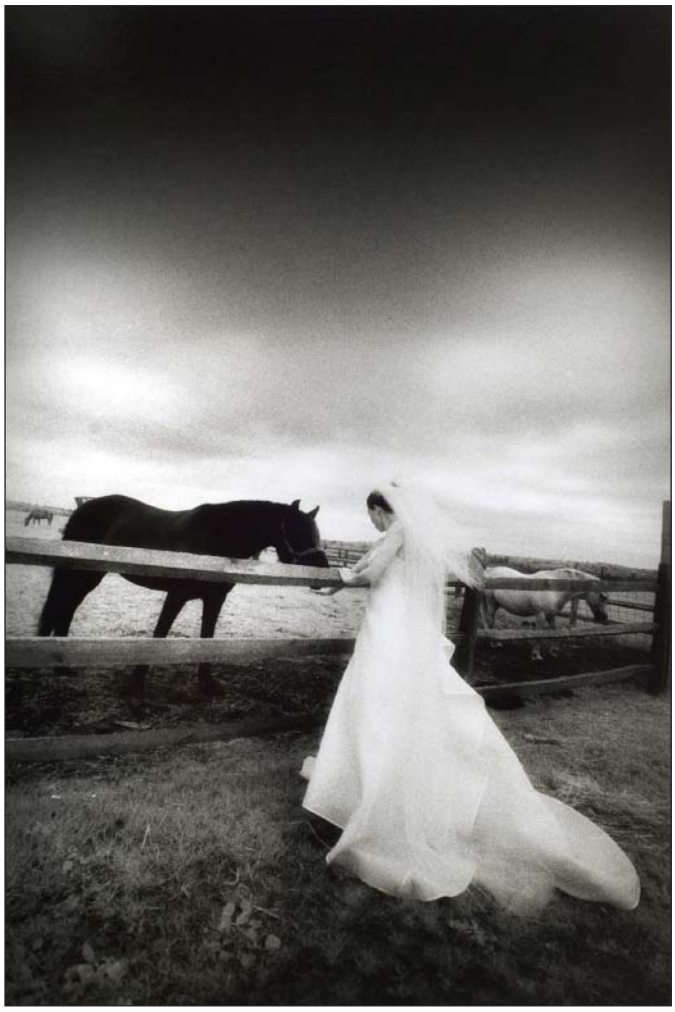
5. JEFF AND KATHLEEN HAWKINS 36
Marketing 36
Advertising 39
The Consultation 39
Private Time on the Wedding Day 40
Workflow 40
Album Design and Production 41
Final Thoughts 41

6. KEN SKLUTE 42
Engagement Session and Consultation 42
Sales and Marketing 44
Pricing 45
Workflow 45
Album Production 47
Final Thoughts 47

7. MICHAEL AYERS 49
Attracting Clients 49
Consultation and Pricing 49
Album Design 52
Album Production 52
Presenting the Album 54
Final Thoughts 54

8. JOE BUISSINK 55
Marketing 55
Sales and Customer Service 57
Pricing 59
Album Design 59
Final Thoughts 61

9. KEVIN AND CLARE KUBOTA 62
Workflow and Proofing 62
Album Design 64
Album Production and Marketing 65
Pricing 67
Additional Albums 67
Final Thoughts 68



Photograph by Joe Buissink.

10. MARIE LABBANCZ 69
Workflow 69
Pricing 71
Album Design 72
Marketing 73
Final Thoughts 74

11. MARTIN SCHEMBRI 75
Marketing 75
Consultations and Customer Service 75
Engagement Portraits 76
Pricing 76
The Wedding Day 78
Workflow and Album Design 78
Album Sales 79
Final Thoughts 81

12. CHARLES AND JENNIFER MARING 82
Excellence in Printing 82
Consultation and Customer Service 82
Pricing 85
Additional Products 86
Workflow 87
Album Design 88
Album Production 88
Final Thoughts 88

13. BRIAN AND JUDITH SHINDLE 89
Getting Started 90
Location and First Impressions 91
Marketing 91
Customer Service 91
Pricing 92
Gift Certificates 92
Service (and Sales) Opportunities 92
The Wedding 93
Workflow 94
Album Production 95
Image Archives 95
Final Thoughts 95

14. JB AND DEETTE SALLEE 96
Sales and Pricing 96
The Wedding Day 96
Workflow 97
Album Design 98
Album Production 101
Other Album Types 101
Final Thoughts 102

15. SUSAN AND STEWART POWERS 103
At the Wedding 103
Workflow 103
Proofing 104
Album Design and Production 106
Pricing 107
Marketing 108
Other Album Types 109
Final Thoughts 109

APPENDIX 1
ALBUM DESIGN OVERVIEW 110
Covers 110
Slip-In Books 110
Bound Books 111
Reversible 111
Flush Mount 112
Magazine Style 112
Press Books 113
Image Boxes 113

APPENDIX 2
ALBUM DESIGN TERMS 114
Types of Albums 114
Cover Design Treatments 115
Other Book Parts 116

APPENDIX 3
ALBUM MANUFACTURERS AND SUPPLIERS 118
Wedding Album Manufacturers 118
Wedding Album Suppliers 121

INDEX 123

Images and design by JB and DeEtte Sallee.

Introduction

Change is inevitable—and it's happening at an ever-quickening pace in the digital realm. Only five years ago I was asking photographers about digital photography and finding many stalwarts who "would never go digital." These days, it's getting harder and harder to find anyone who is shooting film. Those who do remain tend to be hybrid shooters who use both film and digital, claiming the right tool for the right job.

Album Production

That same rapid pace of change has occurred in the production of albums. Where there used to be a few major players and some smaller fringe album companies, there has recently been an explosion in the choices that are available to photographers. The addition of press-printed albums has added immensely to the mix.

Many photographers, if not most, are now using digital exclusively and printing their own images using the latest ink-jet technologies. As a result, many photo labs, in an effort to stay in business, have purchased album-binding equipment and added digital design serv-

There has recently been an explosion in the choices that are available to photographers.

Images and design by Martin Schembri.

Images and design by Brian and Judith Shindle.

ices to help meet the demands of today's photographers. Some are, frankly, not so good—but many are setting the bar higher and higher in an effort to stave off new competition.

Yet, while there have never been more choices available to photographers when it comes to album types, production methods, and finishing options, every innovation seems to be a double-edged sword. With all the

Images and design by Yevant.

choices available, it can be difficult to settle on any single album company. Most album companies offer various lines so you can have different products available for your clients, but each facet of each line has its strengths and weaknesses. No one company has the best of *every* type of album. For example, I still use Leather Craftsmen for my traditional binding and flush-mount albums, but the textured linen paper and metallic and silk covers available from GraphiStudio offer another look that my clients enjoy as an alternative.

Not only are the choices here in the U. S. expanding, opportunities are growing worldwide. With digital files now easily transferred via the Internet, album companies from Australia, Japan, France, Britain, and Italy are mar-

keting their services very aggressively to American photographers. As a result, researching a complete list of album companies for this book (see appendix three) was harder than ever. At the recent PPA and WPPI conventions the number of companies promoting album production was phenomenal. I've done my best to bring you a comprehensive list of what's currently available and will apologize in advance for any that are missed—or, as will inevitably be the case, the new start-ups or failures since the list was compiled. The only constant I predict for the next couple of years will be change.

Album Design

Another area of growth is in the number of album design houses and the software available for designing albums. Due to the especially volatile nature of this category, I haven't attempted to compile a list of these services. Just be aware that there are lots of options; you'll need to do some research to determine what will best fit your needs and workflow. I should also note that I produce instructional wedding album design DVDs through Software Cinema (www.software-cinema.com) that teach you how to use Adobe Photoshop to lay out albums. Three other photographers in this book also sell their own album design software: Yervant offers Page Gallery, Martin Schembri sells YSI (You Select It), and Kevin Kubota has created AutoAlbum. All are worth checking out.

About This Book

This book contains information from top professional photographers who have been in the business for many years and have found solutions that work for them. Through these interviews, I found that album design actually begins with marketing and is shaped by such things as the interview with the bride and groom, the proof-presentation method, the album company, and more. In fact, as you read this book, you'll see that every part of your business helps to shape your album design. Because marketing and business ideas are so important, I started a photographers' web site and monthly newsletter to address these issues: www.successful-photographer.com.

This book is more than a "place this picture here" guide. Check out these photographers' ideas. Take some inspiration from this photographer, a slice of guidance from that one, and twist an idea from another. When you have harvested all you can and melded the ideas together, you will have a product that is unique to your business.

When I decided that producing wedding albums was an artform that preserves the couple's wedding memories, I started searching for information on how to proceed. I found none on the bookshelf, but got some tips from other photographers. I gathered more information at trade shows, but it was rife with sales hype. While I eventually found the products and systems that now work for me, it took years. I hope that this new edition of *The Photographer's Guide to Wedding Album Design and Sales* will help make the process easier for you than it was for me—and that it will save you both time and money.

Images and design by Bob Coates.

CHAPTER ONE

Amanda Sudimack

www.artisanevents.com

Amanda Sudimack knew from a young age that she wanted to pursue her passion for photography and the visual arts. After earning a BFA from the Art Institute of Chicago (with part of her studies at the Art Institute of Florence, in Italy), however, she was faced with two options: continue on to graduate school and teach, or become a commercial photographer. Neither suited her at all. "I always wanted to own my own business and I had just planned my own wedding," says Amanda, "Seeing the options in wedding photography, fresh out of art school, it seemed like a huge opportunity that would work perfectly for me—and it did!"

Since then, Amanda's work has been published in numerous high-end publications, including *Grace Ormonde, Inside Weddings, The Knot,* and *Modern Bride*. She was also honored with accolades in the 2005 and 2007 *Photo District News* (PDN) Top Knots Awards and featured in a print ad. She was also chosen as a finalist in the 2005 ANNE awards, the Professional Photographers of America's (PPA) annual competition for marketing excellence.

Film or Digital?

Film or digital? This was a question that was often heard in the past, but it's not quite as common anymore. When asked, Amanda replied, "I am both." She started before the digital revolution, so her formal training was in film—and she still enjoys the medium. "I have to admit I love both film and digital for different reasons. Ultimately, I get bored with digital and I just find that shooting film keeps me interested in the process." Artisan Events, Amanda's Chicago studio, uses 35mm Canon and Nikon digital SLRs in addition to medium-format Hasselblads and toy cameras, like Holgas and pinholes, to set their imagery apart.

Despite her affection for traditional methods, production at Artisan Events is 100-percent digital. All digital images are captured in the RAW file format, with the CompactFlash (CF) cards backed up to hard drives by assistants when working on location. When they return to the studio after an event or session, any film that was shot is sent out to be processed by hand (no machines). All digital files are then downloaded, checked, then double-checked by a second person to ensure no data is missed. "Isn't that a bit obsessive?" I asked. Amanda replied, "I'd rather be obsessive than lose something!"

"Everything we do is special when it comes to presentation—that's one reason why our clients hire us!"

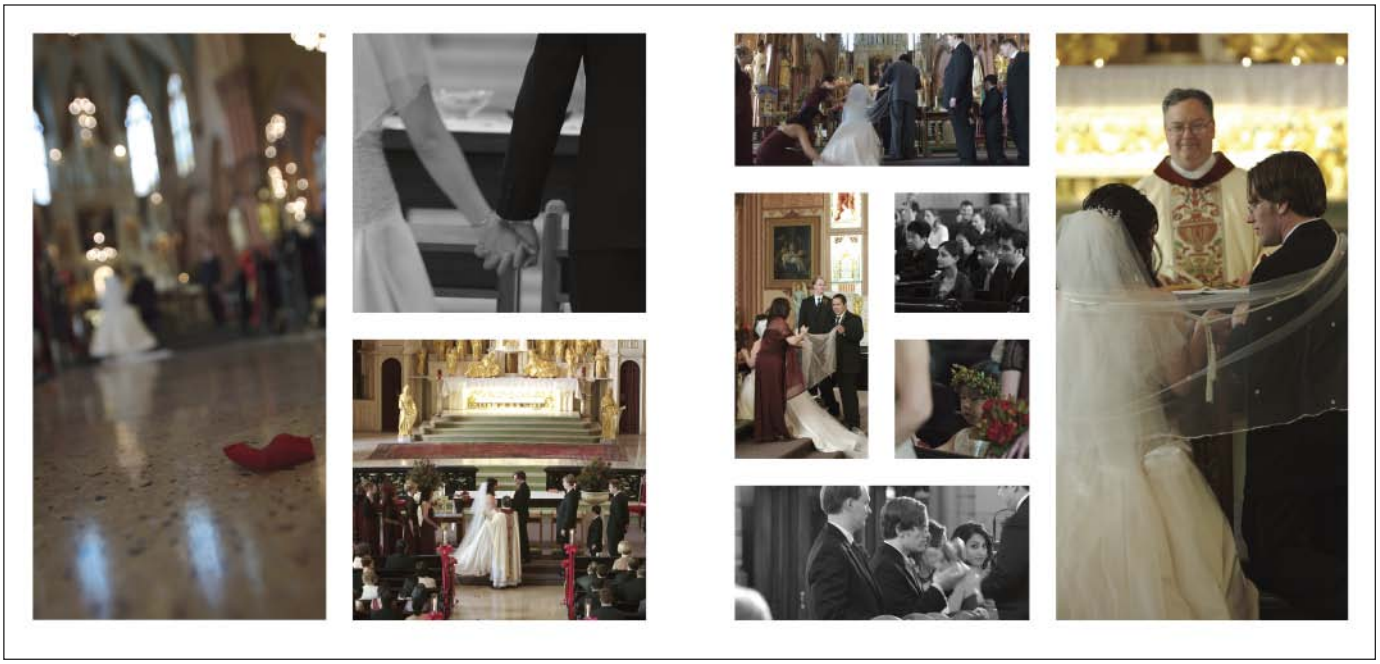
Image Editing

The editing process typically begins by narrowing the day's images down to about one hundred final images per

hour of coverage. For a ten-hour day, this cuts the selection down to about a thousand images. Following this edit, the images are evaluated a second time to choose favorites—about 15 to 25 percent of the images (usually one- to three-hundred images). The full image edit of one thousand files is kept in color and given general adjustments with batch processing instead of individual correction. The selected "favorites," however, are individually preprocessed, retouched, and made ready to go to album design. Many are also converted to black & white. These files are treated exactly as if they had already been ordered, and the studio spends a great deal of time ensuring that they are absolutely flawless.

Album Design

After the edit is complete and the favorites are processed, an album is generally predesigned. This is created as if there were absolutely no budget constraints from the



client. With creative and thought-provoking image compositions, the studio uses the design process to pull everything together. This is all custom, one-of-a-kind work. They're not big fans of Photoshop actions; they want to present real imagery that isn't overproduced.

Once completed, the "ideal" album design is presented to the clients when they come to pick up the proofs, usually two to four weeks after the wedding. "This is key. People are still in the excitement stage, glowing after the wedding, and haven't received the bills from the honeymoon yet," says Amanda. "When we do a predesign, a large majority of the clients order the album on the spot without any changes. Delivering an amazing design to the client within a couple weeks of the wedding while they're still excited is such a huge boost to sales."

This also generates a lot of the income for the studio, since the studio's album design invariably includes more images and pages than were originally ordered. Is this an upsell from the original agreement? "Absolutely!" says Amanda. "Typically our clients spend two to three times what they contract for. Our entire system is set up for huge album sales, and we get them time after time. When clients see what the complete album looks like with their pictures they can't say no!"

How does the album design happen? "We don't use templates," says Amanda. "Every album is unique and individually designed to compliment the imagery. A wide variety of software is used in the production of albums. Adobe InDesign, Photoshop, and Reader, along with Apple Aperture, are all used at different stages. Everything we do is special when it comes to presentation—that's one reason why our clients hire us! Our albums are all handmade in house and we add matching handmade boxes to boot."

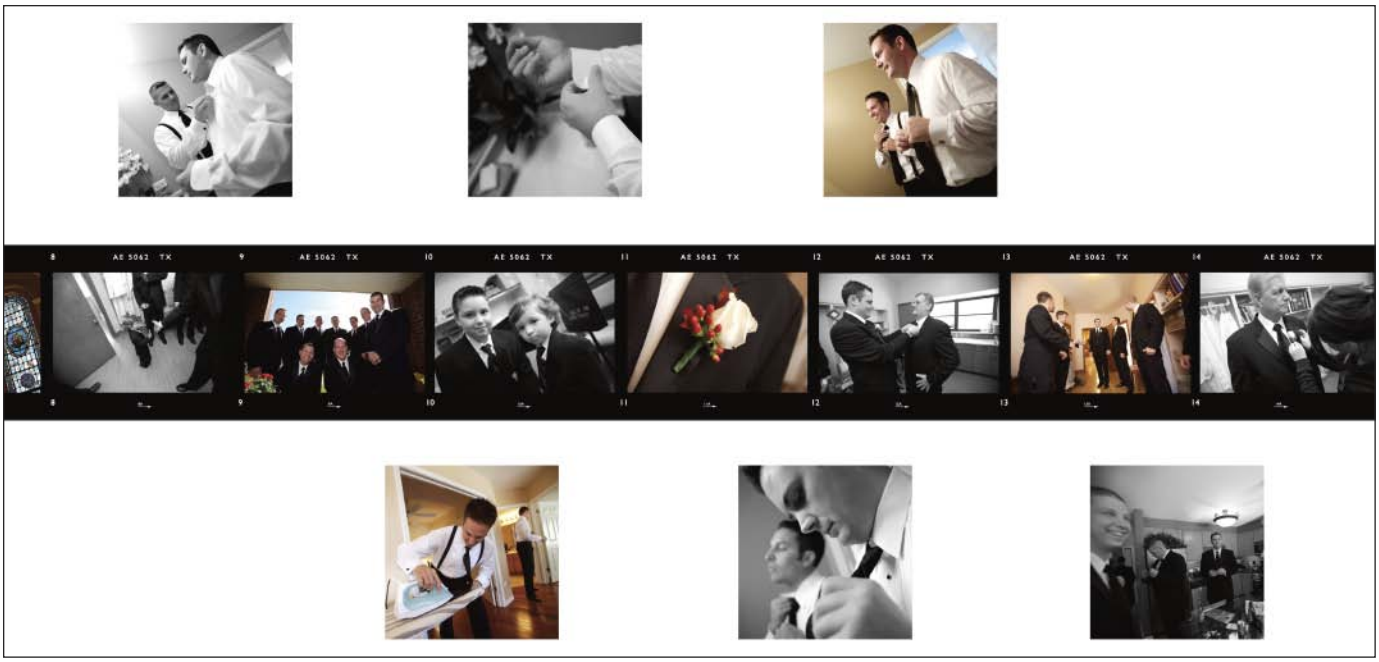
"Our entire system is set up for huge album sales, and we get them time after time."

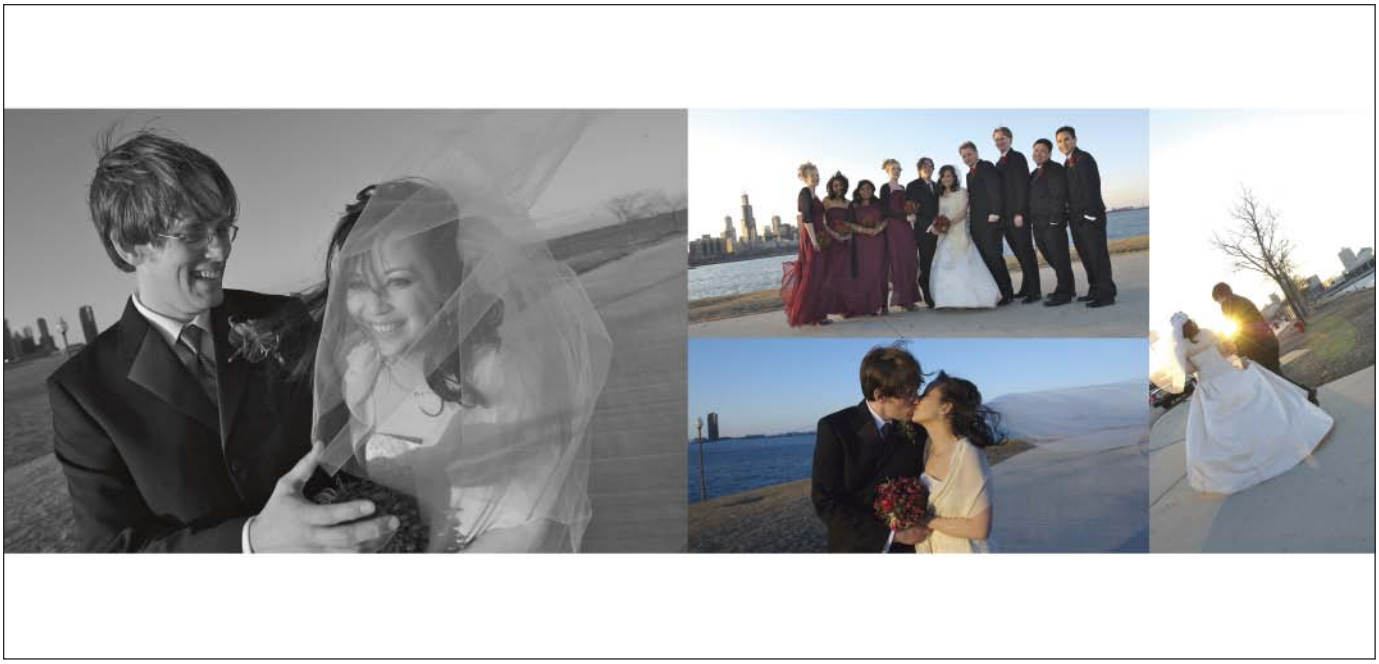
Additionally, every product that's delivered to clients is wrapped like a present. Many clients tell Amanda that they really look forward to receiving their purchases, "It's like getting a gift!" they say. To reinforce the studio's branding, the wrapping paper used is custom designed with the studio's logo. Any paperwork that goes out is also presented in a folder that features the studio's logo.

Album Types and Production

Artisan Events binds about 95 percent of their albums in-house. These are contemporary coffee-table books (books that are designed to be displayed by the client, rather than relegated to a bookshelf). Amanda says Artisan's designs lend themselves well to this particular type of album, but she doesn't recommend it for just any studio. "There was a lot of time and money invested in learning the skills and acquiring the tools to bind in-house," she says, noting that it took about a year to construct and implement a completely archival binding system for their contemporary flush mount albums.

Moving to binding in house was a big undertaking, but Amanda says it was well worth it. She now feels completely certain that she can guarantee her clients' albums—no matter what happens. Binding in-house has also cut the studio's operational costs; more importantly, however, it cut the turnaround times down to next to





nothing. "We do have more headaches, no doubt about it, but we've always been a quality-first operation. Even if it means a few more problems to solve," states Amanda. Artisan Events' 10x10 or 12x12 coffee table books range in price from $2,600 to $12,000 for the first copy. Additional exact copies can range in price from $600 to $5,000. (*Note:* A very small percentage of clients want a more traditional look or a flush-mount album at a lower price than Amanda's in-house binding can create. For these products, they use Zookbinders, because of their excellent quality and service.)

In addition, Amanda's company has recently introduced press books as an option. These are selling as a great add-on to the coffee table books. As an additional revenue source, Artisan Events also has the only album boutique, called Artisan Albums, in Chicago. They sell a plethora of options for walk-in clients in addition to their own photography clients. They sell almost every type of

do-it-yourself album available on the market, from self-stick to slip-in. This leads to larger sales, as customers who came in for the inexpensive album often upgrade to the hand-bound album.

Additional Album Opportunities

With the album assembly infrastructure already in place, the company is able to generate extra income from books other than wedding albums. According to Amanda, "My favorite album project was a family album. One of our favorite clients commissioned us to do a tribute album to her late parents. We've done books for her before and had already photographed two of her three children's weddings the year before. Her parents had both passed away in the last two years and she was still grieving. She dropped off a box of pictures, news clippings, and memorabilia from the 1920s through 2004. We sorted through the goods, edited down what we were going to use, then scanned, designed, printed, and bound this absolutely amazing album for her that told the story of her mom and dad and her family story, including the siblings. She was so overwhelmed when we showed it to her—she cried and laughed. It was a completely rewarding project."

"She was so overwhelmed when we showed it to her—she cried and laughed. It was a completely rewarding project."

Selling Albums

How should photographers who aren't selling wedding albums get going? "Start small, know what you're selling and why," says Amanda. "Know your style and design before selecting the album bindery you want to partner with. So much of that relationship is making sure your bindery compliments your design work."

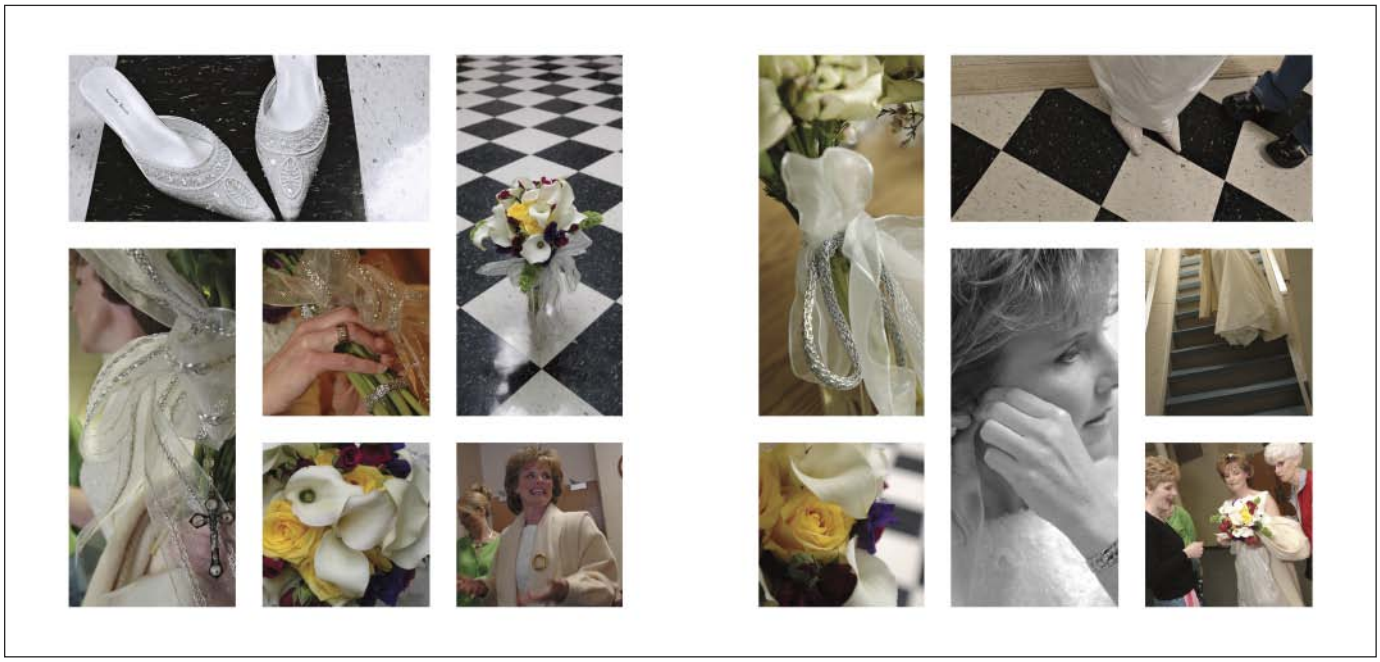
When asked for recommendations for selling parent albums Amanda said, "Sell them to the kids. Most of our parent album sales are gift copies that the bride and groom give to the parents as a thank-you gift. We always offer a large discount on our coffee table book replica copies, and they always sell as gifts."

Albums, at a lower price point, are also sold from engagement sessions. "This is an area we haven't put a lot of attention to as yet. I know we could sell a lot more, but

our major concentration is selling the large wedding albums," says Amanda

Final Thoughts

Amanda offers the following advice to photographers: "Invest in your design and make yourself different from other photographers. Create your own unique style. So much of what everyone is doing is the same, because they're using the same album-design software, outsourcing companies, etc. You have to be unique to demand $10,000 for an album. That can really be accomplished in your design aesthetic."



CHAPTER TWO

Yervant

www.yervant.com

Asked about his start in photography, Yervant explains, "My father was a photographer in Ethiopia. He had a studio and lab and photographed much of the royalty and the Emperor Haile Selassie's requirements. I grew up watching, playing in the studio, and attempting to print from a very young age. He gave me my first 35mm camera for my sixth birthday, allowing me to waste much film over the years." Yervant loved photography and the lab, and he was always at the studio after school and during holidays. At the age of eleven, one of Yervant's African landscape prints was entered in a competition. The emperor heard about the print winning first place and extended an invitation for Yervant to visit him at the palace. "I put on my navy-blue suit, wet my hair, and got picked up by His Majesty's chauffeur. The emperor gave me a gold medal," he recalls.

After high school, Yervant studied fine arts in Venice, Italy, and then attended the Photography Studies College in Melbourne, Australia. He chose to set up business in wedding and portrait photography because he loves working with people. Each wedding gives him the chance to be a portrait photographer, fashion photographer, photojournalist, and landscape photographer all in one day. He's also surrounded with happy people all day long. "What more can one want from a job?" asks Yervant.

Yervant is a highly recognized photographer, as evidenced by the numerous awards he has been granted by the Australian Professional Photography Association (AIPP)—including Triple Master of Photography, Wedding Album of the Year, Wedding Photographer of the Year, and Highest-Scoring Wedding Print.

Marketing and Customer Service

Yervant markets his business by advertising in the top-end bridal magazines and through his studio location in Melbourne, a mecca for art, fashion, and exclusive bridal couture. In addition, he has a great reputation, which generates referrals. Magazine editorials about his work appear on a regular basis.

"We never sell or apply sales techniques to book a customer. If they can see themselves within my work, price is usually not a factor."

"My wife and partner, Anie, is the bridal couple's first point of contact, and it is usually by phone," says Yervant. "An initial inquiry is usually made regarding availability on a particular date. Once this is established, the couple comes in for a personal consultation. Anie shows them a variety of albums, explains pricing, and books a date nine times out of ten.

"Anie's background is in sales and marketing for multinational firms. She joined me in business after our son, Ricky, was born. Anie can talk underwater. She is vi-

vacious, bubbly, and very friendly. She takes a genuine interest in each and every client, and they love her. She is absolutely biased about my work and sells it with passion. She cries with clients over beautiful pictures and laughs with them about funny moments."

Yervant and Anie have set up an attractive storefront studio with a modern and warm atmosphere that is welcoming and comfortable. Beautiful work is displayed on the walls, with attention paid to the way each print is displayed. Prints are all the same size and are framed alike, creating a serene uniformity with vastly different images. There is beautiful background music playing when Anie greets the clients. She shows them many albums, takes them through pricing and sits back and waits for their decision. According to Yervant, "We never sell or apply sales techniques to book a customer. We just show them our photography and relate them to it. If they can see themselves within my work, price is usually not a factor."

Engagement Portraits

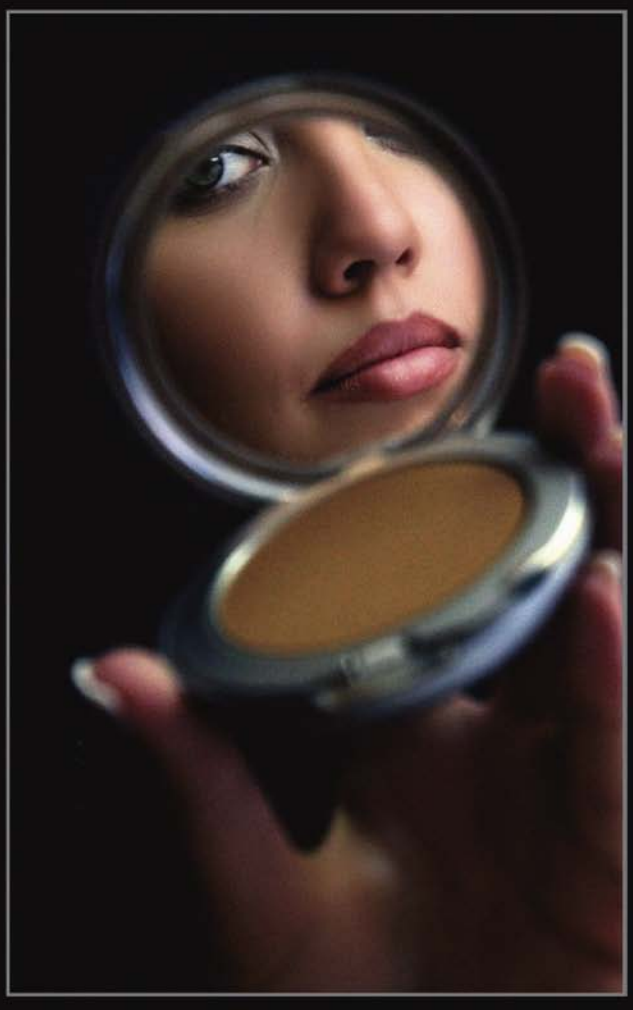
Engagement portraits are not highly sought after in Australia. Yervant will do a modern studio shoot in many cases or take the couple outdoors and do candid captures. "I do not like posing my clients," says Yervant. "I prefer to bring out their personality and character in the capture rather than pose them to a typical perfect picture."

The Wedding Day

The wedding day session starts at the groom's place. Yervant arrives with an assistant photographer about an hour before the groom leaves for the ceremony. He takes casual and detail shots of the preparations, friends, and groomsmen—and pays particular attention to the parents. "I take many shots with both parents and the groom, then photograph portraits of the groom that are casual, fun, and spontaneous. Afterward, I go to the bride's home. I cover her place much in the same way and then go to where the ceremony is taking place. I cover the marriage ceremony thoroughly, but a big emphasis is placed on what is going on around the bride and groom; for example, I capture the parents' emotions, friends' expressions, little children and their behavior, details of decorations, details of the location, flowers, attendants—everything and everybody that make up this special day. I virtually have eyes behind my head and try not to miss anything." Yervant's assistant will do the same, and they end up with a coverage of stills as if they had videotaped the day.

"I prefer to bring out their personality and character in the capture rather than pose them to a typical perfect picture."

After the service, Yervant photographs the family formals then proceeds to have some fun with the bridal group. "First, I will take them to a bar or coffee shop to relax and buy them some sustenance. It's amazing how quickly they become real and almost forget I am holding



a camera and shooting while all this is going on. Then I take them to locations, choosing scenes that suit the couple. A modern funky duo is well suited to little alleyways and graffiti-filled spaces, colorful walls, and city streets—fun stuff. I encourage them to dance and party while I take shots. A classical or quieter couple is better suited to romantic locations like the beach, bluestone buildings, and classy cafés.

"On her wedding day, the bride is at her best. She's happy and radiant. I ask her to pose like a fashion model and she goes wild! She plays to the camera, laughs and giggles, and has a ball. The groom adores her and is absolutely taken by the moment. I turn the camera on him too, and their bridal attendants as well. People in the street watch, and the couple becomes even more excited. They have a crowd of people loving what they see. They pose more and play to the camera more. I am taking these photos and capturing the crowd's reaction. That is the day: real stuff, real people, and unexpected moments."

Finally, they go to the reception venue, where Yervant and his assistant photograph the details of the decorations, the bridal couple within the venue, the cake and cake-cutting, and anything else that the bride and groom request, including Uncle Harry and Auntie May.

Workflow

Yervant averages six- to seven-hundred shots throughout the day, most captured with available light and sometimes adding a tungsten video light. He was one of the first to start using a digital camera at weddings and loves the re-

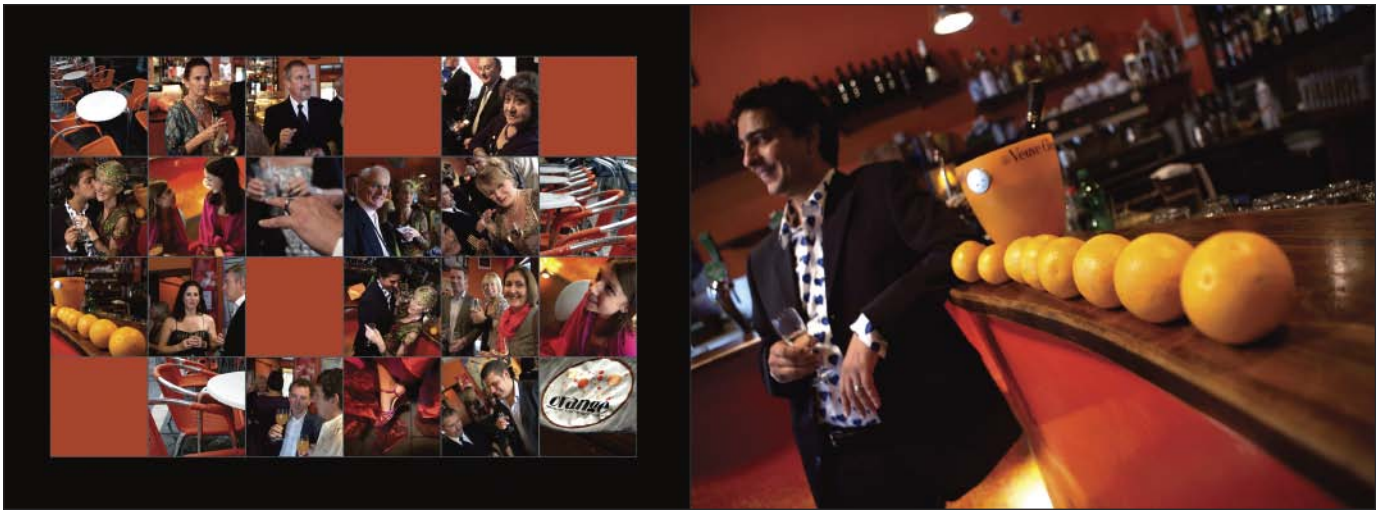
sults. Images are downloaded and edited the same night. Files are sent to a lab to print a page layout of twelve images. Some images are illustrated in black & white. Each image is numbered, and pages are mounted in an attractive album and presented to the couple as soon as they return from their honeymoon. The couple will take this album home and choose fifty to sixty or more images. Then, an appointment is made to design their album.

Pricing

Every couple is given a component-based price list. This allows them to pick and choose any combination of products that are offered. Some couples just want large wall prints, not a wedding album. As long as they meet the minimum purchase price requirement, Yervant allows them to buy exactly what they want. Every couple is offered payment-by-installment from the day of booking; it is easier for most couples to pay the total over a twelve-month period. Yervant's albums are priced between $5,000 and $15,000.

Album Design

"Anie or I will spend over an hour with each couple, going through their choices," says Yervant. "We first establish the style of album they require, storybook [a magazine-like layout with graphic elements added] or traditional [photos in mats]. Then, we go through the images and the couple's choices and finalize a list. Most couples trust me to design their album, then see a layout for approval. Some request small changes. As most of my album sales are for the storybook album, couples have booked my studio for that very product. Having chosen



favorite images, they leave it up to me to create their story." To upsell the album, Yervant designs some additional pages to show the couple. It's hard for the couple to eliminate them all—they love buying up, and leave the studio with huge smiles and many thank-yous.

Yervant suggests keeping it simple; too many images and busy layouts become boring, so keep classic lines for timeless elegance. "The concept of volumes is also very exciting," says Yervant. "We are creating separate volumes for each main segment of the day and presenting the day's story in three coffee table albums designed in matching but slightly different colors. The top album is smaller than the bottom album, so it's an attractive presentation," states Yervant.

Personalization is also key. For example, to sell more parent albums, Yervant says, "Show samples and explain the emotional value of each parent owning a copy of the main album—then offer to personalize a page for each parent with the couple's special words."

Yervant produces all of his album designs in Page Gallery, a program he designed and sells on his web site. "This provides other photographers worldwide the opportunity to make my style of magazine albums," he says.

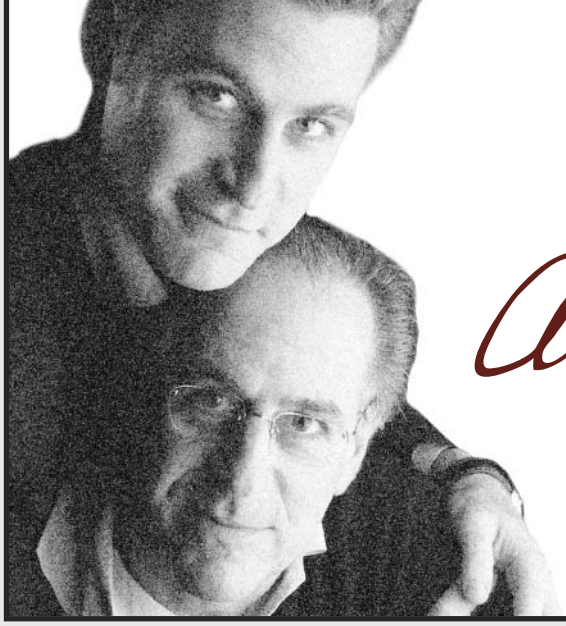
It takes Yervant around six months from the date the order is placed to deliver the finished product. Once the page layout is created, the couple is invited back for a preview and to make any final changes that are needed before the book goes into production.

Album Production

"I use John Garner Bookcrafts in Australia," says Yervant. "I have known John for years and like his work, he has very quick turnaround and rarely any faults or problems. I am also working with GraphiStudio." As a special touch, Yervant has his own custom covers and styles that both Bookcrafts and GraphiStudio make specifically with special leathers and special formats. Each album is packed in a custom-made box or case for best presentation. The album is then delivered to the client in a custom bag.

Final Thoughts

Yervant's advice is, "Have fun doing your job. If you don't, the results show it. I think it is important to be on the ball with new technology, new products, and trends. Be aware of what is going on out there beyond your suburb, state, or country. You don't have to be a trendsetter, but see what others are doing and keep up. Enjoy what you are doing, and if you start calling it 'work,' get out and do something else!"



CHAPTER THREE

Andy and Brian Marcus

www.fredmarcus.com

Andy Marcus grew up with wedding photography. "My father started the business in 1941. I came into it when I was thirteen years old, assisting him with weddings. After about four or five years, I started to shoot partial weddings. I already knew how to pose people and set up lighting. I never really went to school for it; I just picked it up from watching my father."

Marcus uses the same technique to train photographers who work for him now. He feels it's really a learn-by-doing thing. Prior to joining the studio in 2004, Andy's son Brian spent several years in California working with various photographers and creating a name for himself. Ultimately, he chose to return to New York and continue the tradition that his grandfather began over sixty years earlier. "Brian's insight and knowledge of what young brides are looking for in today's market, the kind of images and style of album they want, has been invaluable to our studio," says Andy.

Andy holds Master Photographer and Photographic Craftsman degrees from PPA. He is the author of *Wedding Photojournalism: Techniques and Images in Black & White* (Amherst Media, 1999) and speaks at national and local photography conventions. He has written many articles and been featured in major photography magazines and in almost all major bridal magazines.

Marketing and Customer Service

"Most of my calls are from people looking for information, and I always explain to them that it is very difficult to give information about something visual over the telephone. I use the wedding gown analogy: You wouldn't call Bloomingdale's and ask 'How much is a wedding gown?' The answer you'll get is that they have gowns for $2,000 and for $20,000, but that doesn't tell you what they look like. You really have to see them. It's the same with photography. You really have to come in and see the work. That's my first thing, to get them in the door; I know that once they're in the door, they will see the difference between what I do and what my competitors are doing," says Andy.

"I know that once they're in the door, they will see the difference between what I do and what my competitors are doing."

What happens when the bride crosses the studio's threshold? "We sit down and I really listen to what she wants," he says. "I ask questions about what she is looking for, what she is interested in, what she likes and doesn't like in photography. Some people have very specific ideas; others have no clue. I get a feeling for the wedding—location, outdoors or indoors, formal or informal—and then bring out sample albums of that particular style. If somebody is having a tent wedding at their

parents' home, I'm not going to show a very formal wedding at a hotel. I have albums made for different situations, and that's what I show. I must have fifty samples, both in color and in black & white, with sizes from 5x5 to 11x14 inches."

Pricing

"We talk to the bride and show her albums," Andy continues. "Then we go over prices, discuss how we work, and what options are available. We start with a basic album and a basic arrangement, which includes a photographer and an assistant for X number of hours." Everything else is additional. Marcus has a list with the costs for additional photographs or additional bindings if parents want albums or wall portraits. The list is based on time and materials, but he doesn't mark up for materials.

With seven full-time photographers, including Andy, he does charge differently if he shoots the wedding himself rather than assigning the event to one of his associates. The company's complete written price list is revised every year.

Once a bride has signed up for the studio's services, Andy gets a reservation fee from her. He makes an important distinction between a reservation fee and a deposit. "A reservation fee is not refundable; a deposit is. Despite this, if something happens and a wedding gets cancelled, I normally return the reservation fee immediately. I feel that, even though it is an inconvenience to me or I won't be working, once the bride *does* get married, she will use us for her pictures. She will appreciate that I returned that fee, but holding the fee is always an option—especially if the cancellation comes at the last minute."

The Wedding Day

On the wedding day, Marcus arrives at the site already knowing where he is going to work; if it is a private home or somewhere he's never shot, he will go an hour early

and scout where to photograph. "I have an assistant with me always. While I'm checking things out, the assistant is setting up equipment, lighting, and cameras, and loading film." The next step is to find the bride and start photographing. Andy's shots are different depending on whether black & white or color is used. "I usually photograph people getting ready in black & white. I've never had a bride who ordered pictures of herself getting ready in color," he says.

Marcus normally fills a traditional color album with family photographs. "I try to get all the family portraits before the guests arrive and before the wedding starts," Andy explains. "This is something I push for, explaining the pluses and minuses to the bride. I do all the combi-

nations of family I need to get done. Even though photojournalism is big—and I do photojournalism—I also know that my brides love portraits and their parents love portraits. I would say that 50 percent of what I sell from the day of the wedding is portraits." Marcus feels the biggest reason most photographers who are photojournalists don't do portraits is because they do not know how. He believes if you create beautiful portraits, people will buy them. The parents, aunts, and other family members like to have them because it's a record of the family at that particular time in life.

"I don't get any grief from the bride and groom about seeing each other before the ceremony because they appreciate that I am concerned about their enjoying the wedding and not being taken away from their reception for photographs," he says. "So, depending on the size of

the family, I schedule anywhere from two to two-and-a-half hours for portraits before the wedding. I like to do it at my own pace and I also like to allow a little time for the bride to be late, which she usually is." Andy stresses the idea that everyone should respect everybody else's time. The hairdresser, the photographer, the church, and the banquet people all have their own time. If you take any time away from anyone, their job will not be done properly. He suggests, "If you propose being on time to all vendors in a nice way, people do listen." Using this approach, he's been successful in ensuring that everything runs on schedule.

"When I push the button on the camera it is a shot that I really want to get; otherwise, I don't take the picture."

As far as capturing the actual photographs is concerned, Andy says, "I'm on top of things and try to anticipate. I think a good photographer needs to anticipate; otherwise, you are there after the moment happens and you miss it. For example, a good photographer captures the expression on a father's face when he looks at his daughter as they are walking down the aisle. When a bride and groom are having their first dance, I always expect a dip at the end. I'm waiting for it, ready for it. It may not happen, but as least I'm there before it happens, and ready."

Delivering the Images

After eliminating five or six images, Fred Marcus Studios average five- to seven-hundred frames for each event. Andy's father taught him to make every shot count. "When I push the button on the camera it is a shot that I really want to get; otherwise, I don't take the picture. I find that brides get confused with too many pictures. If you give them too many choices, it overwhelms them; it affects orders and the time in which you receive the orders."

Marcus provides the couple with 4x5-inch proofs, which are delivered in an attractive box. He used albums years ago, but they cost $80 to $100 and customers would rip them up or write on them. He now uses an attractive cardboard box, made from the same material in which their Leather Craftsmen albums are delivered, that

costs only $1.10. The box is wrapped in gold ribbon and comes with a set of instructions on how to order. Andy has discovered over the years that people like to lay the pictures out on the table, and says that even if the photos were in an album, people would still lay them out. Marcus doesn't use lab numbering; instead, each proof is numbered by hand and sorted in sequential order.

Album Design and Production

According to Andy, his son Brian has brought the custom-designed album to a new level, creating albums that resonate with elegance and style. This is exactly what the studio's high-end clients are looking for.

Whereas a few short years ago the studio's albums were laid out by hand, they now do most of their design on computers. This allows them to show the completed album design to their client before having even made one print. This cuts down on misunderstandings and lets them make any needed changes before the images are printed.

Brian links the albums to a web page where clients can view the layout by entering a name and password. That way, clients can view the album at home before coming in to go over it at the studio—a great timesaver. After the bride signs off on the album, it is sent by FTP to the lab, then to Leather Craftsmen for binding.

Final Thoughts

Andy recommends that new photographers get hooked up with a high quality studio where they can learn lighting, posing and—most importantly—how to talk to people. He emphasizes that the whole schmoozing end of the wedding business is very important. "I've seen very mediocre photographers who know how to speak well to clients be very successful in the business."

CHAPTER FOUR

Bob Coates

www.bcweddingphoto.com

I came to photography late in life compared to most photographers. Borrowing my roommate's 35mm camera to go on vacation when I was twenty-five years old, I managed to bring home some pretty good images. My girlfriend at the time (soon to become my wife) encouraged me by purchasing for me a 35mm camera of my very own. Over the next thirteen years, I sporadically took photos, had a darkroom, had some one-man shows in small towns, and was a stringer for small newspapers and the Associated Press. In March of 1995, I decided to go pro and have never looked back.

Professional Photographers of America (PPA), was instrumental in helping me to understand photography as a business. Wedding and Portrait Photographers International (WPPI), Arizona PPA, and other organizations have pointed me in the right direction to have a successful and profitable business. Now I share my skills on marketing and Photoshop by presenting programs on the local and national level, writing articles for photography publications including *Professional Photographer, Rangefinder,* and *Shutterbug.* I am certified by PPA and hold the Master of Photography and Photographic Craftsman degrees. There are Fuji Masterpiece and Kodak Gallery Awards on my mantel, and General and Loan Collection Prints gracing the walls of my residential studio.

Marketing

Marketing for Bob Coates Photography is very hands-on. Everywhere I go, I hand out business cards with five images and my logo on the front, contact information and logos of photographic associations on the back, and a sales message and testimonials in the middle. Taking my business card case is as important as grabbing my wallet when I leave the house. I also send out press releases to the local papers approximately once every six weeks. In addition, I have a strong Internet presence that brings in a large number of inquiries, along with referrals that generate a lot of potential clients.

"Personality is important to the final album design. It's difficult to create wonderful photos if you don't get cooperation from your subjects."

Consultations

I interview prospective couples as much as they interview me. If I sense even a little vibe that we are not on the same wavelength when it comes to what I produce and their expectations, I'll refer them to another photographer who I feel will be a better fit. Personality is important to the final album design. It's difficult to create wonderful photos if you don't get cooperation from your subjects.

Pricing

My pricing is set up with collections of services. I have four collections that include my personal services as the main photographer. For those who can't afford to have me as the lead photographer, there are other collections available with other photographers who capture the images. I also offer an à la carte price list for those whose needs aren't met by the main collections, and there is always a minimum that must be met.

The most expensive collection I offer includes everything I ever wanted to sell at a wedding—even a massage from a professional masseuse for the bride and groom. (After all, if anyone is going to spend that kind of money with Bob Coates Photography I want to make sure I rub them the right way!) No one has purchased it yet, but it sets the tone and makes the other collections seem more affordable.

All money is due in full one week prior to the wedding, unless the couple has elected to make time payments. In this case, all monies are due before the final album is delivered. Dates are reserved with a retainer, which also locks in the prices quoted to the couple. All expectations and services to be rendered are put in contract form. This is for my protection as well as for the bride and groom.

Working with an Assistant

When I shoot a wedding, there is always a second photographer in the mix—after all, you can't be in two places at once. When not helping with lighting or running errands, my assistant is shooting. He's able to capture extra expressions when the subjects' attention is focused on me during formals, and he can provide different coverage angles. For example, when I'm catching the processional from inside the chapel, he can be outside photographing the bride as she enters the ornate door. In the case of our many outdoor weddings in Sedona, AZ, I'll be photographing up-close-and-personal while he hikes up the hill

to get overview and scene-setting images. For many years, I didn't work with a second photographer or assistant; now I would never work any other way.

Workflow

After our RAW-format digital files have been processed, the couple is presented with a proof DVD from Emotion Media. This contains a slide show with fifty to one-hundred images. The proofing section of the DVD allows the bride and groom to see their images on as large a screen as they have, which has eliminated complaints from couples about not being able to see the expressions well enough to make a decision. Couples can also view the images in black & white and sepia tone through the DVD. (*Note:* I also use Emotion Media [www.emotion-media .com] to produce sales DVDs highlighting my best work set to music—an invaluable sales tool.)

Select images are uploaded to the web within a shopping cart. This is accomplished with the help of Adobe Photoshop's image processor feature and php code (which allows two folders of images to be uploaded—one of thumbnails, one of larger images—and automatically lays out the web pages). It's smart to have a second computer for doing automated production work so you won't be tied up during this process.

"For many years, I didn't work with a second photographer or assistant; now I would never work any other way."

Album Design

We encourage the couple to allow us to create their album from our image selections, as it usually takes them too long to get their choices back for timely delivery of the album. If the couple insists, we have them prepare

three lists from the DVD: favorite photos to be featured in the album; photos they like but don't necessarily have to appear; and images they definitely do not want.

Then the fun begins—telling the story, adding backgrounds and text, placing multiple images, and adding special effects. The design of most of our books is very clean and graphic, with multiple images on a page, drop shadows, text, and other features. I suggest being very careful with the design to make sure it has a timeless appeal that won't look dated in twenty years.

When the layout is complete the album is uploaded to the web for approval using Photoshop's web gallery feature. Alternately, it can be converted to a PDF slideshow.

Album Production

My photos are printed in-house using Epson 4800 and 7800 wide-format printers. Album prints are designed for the flush-mount style of album. The Leather Craftsmen 3500-series is my choice for flush-mount books. The prints are mounted back-to-back on an archival board, then sprayed and textured. The pages are then bound into a top-grain cowhide leather cover with the edge of the print visible. Most of my album covers are designed with a photo inset in the cover and branded with the bride's and groom's names and date of the wedding. This is a great upgrade to the look of the albums. For traditional matted and mounted albums, Leather Craftsmen has great service and looks with their reversible albums.

"I suggest being very careful with the design to make sure it has a timeless appeal."

GraphiStudio wedding books are another way of presenting images. These books are printed on textured linen paper and have no visible seam, allowing for more creative two-page designs. If you don't want to do the actual layout yourself, GraphiStudio will also build an album according to your instructions.

Final Thoughts

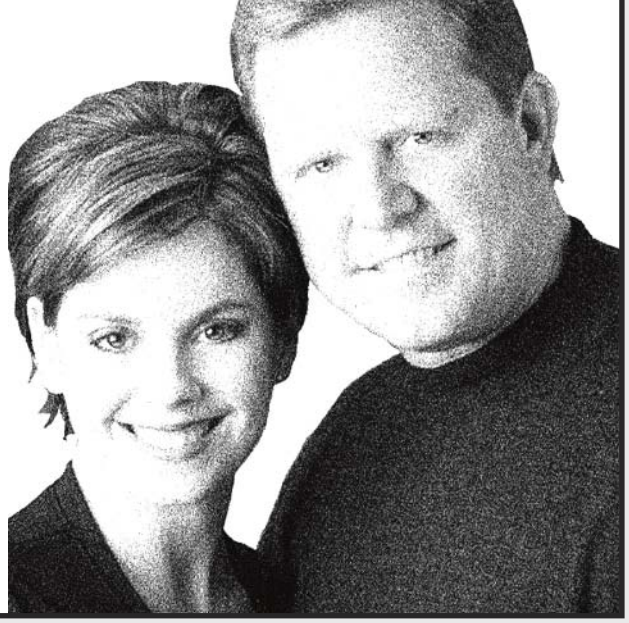
My advice is to network with other photographers; share information and ideas, and attend as many photography seminars, classes, and conventions as you possibly can.

If you have the expertise, instruct other photographers one-on-one, or present programs through PPA, WPPI or other local and national organizations. It is amazing how much you learn when you teach. I have founded two local photography groups (Virgin Islands Professional Photographers Association and Northern Arizona Professional Photographers) and served as President to the Arizona PPA, so I can attest to how much this can help your photography career. And don't forget to participate in print competition—having your images and albums judged by other professionals is invaluable to growing your photography skills by leaps and bounds.

Finally, study business and marketing as much as photography—or even more. Photography is a business. I have met excellent image-makers who no longer work because they didn't understand proper pricing, profit and loss, cost of goods sold, and how to get their business recognized through marketing. Other photographers whose images are nothing special generate large incomes because of their marketing and business skills. A great resource is www.successful-photographer.com.

CHAPTER FIVE

Jeff and Kathleen Hawkins



www.jeffhawkins.com

In 1979, Jeff Hawkins started out in fashion photography. While working with new models, he says, "We had to teach them posing as well as makeup. It really was a good way of working and learning, but there really was no money in that field at that level." Therefore, he started moving into other avenues of photography, doing more commercial work, taking some head shots, and doing public relations photography." Jeff soon found out that he was, by nature, a people photographer. He picked up a couple of weddings, realized that he liked doing them—and thought it would allow him to work less, yet make more money.

Jeff holds the PPA Masters and Photographic Craftsman degrees and is PPA certified, he is listed as one of the top sixty photographers in the world as an Explorer of Light with Canon USA. He has earned two Loan Collection prints and is consistently displayed in PPA's Showcase book. With his wife Kathleen, he is coauthor of *Professional Marketing & Selling Techniques for Wedding Photographers* and *Professional Techniques for Digital Wedding Photography,* both published by Amherst Media.

Kathleen Hawkins married into photography nearly fifteen years ago. She has a Masters in Business Administration and a Photographic Craftsman degree with PPA. Kathleen is also the author of numerous books, including *Digital Photography for Children's and Family Portraiture, Marketing and Selling Techniques for Digital Portrait Photography, The Parent's Guide to Photographing Children and Families,* as well as *The Bride's Guide to Wedding Photography,* all published by Amherst Media. Kathleen is a three-time winner of the ANNE marketing excellence awards with PPA.

Marketing

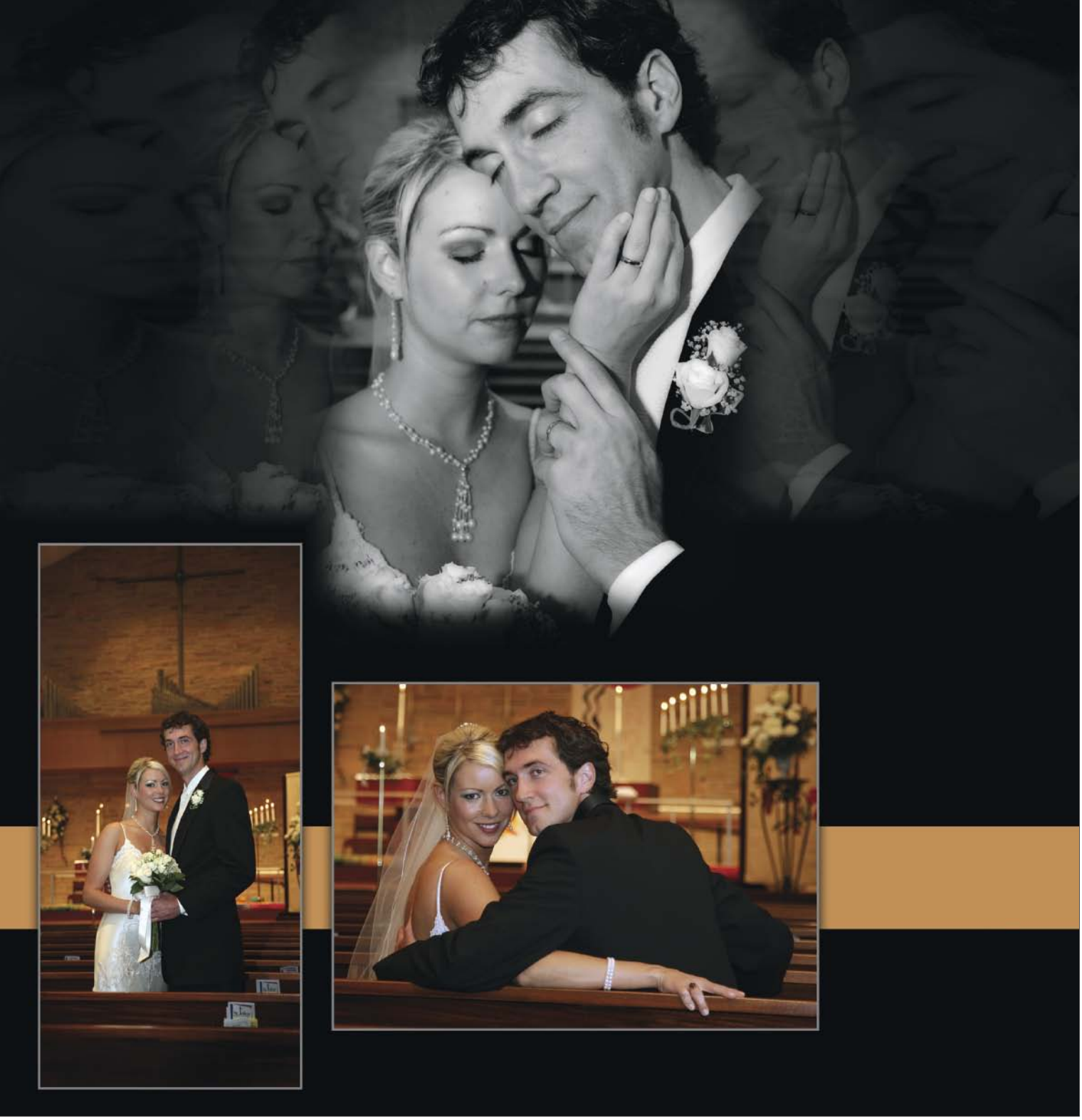
When building a wedding photography business, Jeff and Kathleen stress the importance of networking with other vendors—especially when getting started. "Get out and network with wedding organizations," says Kathleen. "In our area, there's one called The Orlando Wedding Guild, which is made up of about 150 to 160 vendors from all

"Word of mouth is very important. Establish a good quality product and let people know about it."

facets of the industry. Networking will work for you if you participate and show up at every meeting. Get involved with the board of directors. Volunteer your time so people get to know you. People refer people they like, are comfortable with, and believe to be their friends. However, you don't want people referring you because you stroke their palm with a little bit of cash or kickbacks." Adds Jeff, "We want people to refer us because they respect our work. Word of mouth is very important. Establish a good quality product and let people know about it."

The Hawkins' also create stock photography—something that many photographers fail to do. "Provide stock images to bridal publications before they ask for it," suggests Kathleen. "Brides will see your name and that's important; it establishes a sense of stature in their eyes. If they see your name everywhere, they think that you must be good. We supply the stock free of charge on the condition that the business or magazine include a photo credit with every image. Some photographers balk at this; they feel that we are giving our work away—but it actually helps us greatly with name recognition."

Jeff and Kathleen feel that their web site is a very big factor in the success of their business. Without a presence on the web, photographers lose a major chunk of revenue



and name recognition; to Kathleen and Jeff, not having a web site is equivalent to not having a phone. Having a positive, easy-to-navigate site is such an important part of the marketing scheme that building one should be one of the first things a new photographer does. "In fact," says Kathleen, "what we put on our stock images when we request photo credit is 'JeffHawkins.com,' not 'Jeff Hawkins Photography.' That makes it quick for people to get to our site."

Bridal shows are another option for attracting new clients. "We participate in two to three bridal shows a year, another good way to advertise," says Jeff. "In the information request form at the bridal show, though, we don't want mailing addresses; we ask for e-mail addresses.

An hour after the show is over, Kathleen is e-mailing these brides before other vendors start bombarding them with phone calls. Kathleen can actually establish a rapport with the bridal couple through e-mail, even though they haven't even come to see us yet. E-mail is a very powerful source of communication."

Advertising

Jeff Hawkins Photography tries to establish a certain market level through the quality of their advertising. "We advertise in bridal publications; the *Perfect Wedding Guide* is one such publication locally, but it is franchised around the United States—I believe they have location-specific guides in fifty-seven cities around the country. Through supplying stock photography, our images are seen in all fifty-seven of those markets."

The Consultation

Jeff and Kathleen work by appointment only and prospects are qualified over the phone before a meeting is scheduled. When the couple arrives for their initial visit, they see an upscale commercial studio with a homey feel. Jeff and Kathleen give a warm welcome and immediately offer a tour of the gallery. Then, they have the couple fill out an interview sheet, which is displayed in a leather folio. "One of the most important items on the interview sheet is the couple's occupation. This establishes what kind of personality these people have and tells us how we should approach them," says Kathleen. "If the person is an accountant, we know that she or he is very detail-oriented. We approach that person differently than we would someone in a less exacting occupation."

"We ask a lot of questions because we want to know how they envision their day."

"We ask a lot of questions because we want to know how they envision their day. Based on our experience, we can quickly paint a picture of their wedding day, working our studio into their picture. Most couples like unobtrusive photojournalistic photography. Many don't know what that term means, but they understand it's not a photographer 'in their face' the entire day," says Kathleen.

That approach fits right in with the Hawkins' style and is the kind of photography that they use to advertise in publications. "We want to capture the day as it happens and not stage it," Jeff adds. He likes clients to know that they can feel free to be themselves, and he feels people photograph better when they don't know they are being photographed.

Private Time on the Wedding Day

If the couple wants some posed pictures, but without the post ceremony stress, they can take advantage of what the Hawkins' call "Private Time" on the wedding day. This is a scheduled time, before the guests arrive for the wedding, when the bride and groom get to spend some time alone and have their formal portraits created. "Private Time has become a very positive, very memorable experience for the groom," says Jeff. "He sees the bride come into the room, and she looks the best she is going to look all day. We then create all posed pictures before the wedding—and it's finished. The couple can go about enjoying their day without worrying about having pictures taken afterward." When they show couples what they are going to be experiencing, most will agree to see each other before the wedding. Jeff tells couples to allow at least two hours before the event for Private Time, because they have to tuck the bride away approximately thirty to forty minutes before people start arriving.

When they show couples what they are going to be experiencing, most will agree to see each other before the wedding.

"We shoot between five- and six-hundred digital images," says Jeff, adding that shooting digital allows the Hawkins' to present a slide show at the reception of images captured earlier in the day. Jeff's assistant creates this using iViewMedia Pro or Adobe Bridge. The couple can select to have the images displayed on a laptop or LCD projector. "Most go the laptop route, since we can be very unobtrusive near an entrance and people can gather around. It is a very positive public relations tool."

Workflow

Jeff Hawkins Photography currently proofs on CD as well as on-line for ordering. "We provide the couple with a proofing CD created by Emotion Media," explains Jeff. "That's a slide show in a movie format. Each image has a number attached to it, and that is what the couple is going to order from." He adds that the slideshow is also grandparent-friendly, featuring very large image numbers! Jeff and Kathleen provide order forms with each CD.

Recently, online proofing has become very popular. With this strategy, Kathleen sends an e-mail to the couple while they are still away on their honeymoon. When

they return home, they check their messages and see, "Hope you had a good time on the honeymoon. It is time to schedule your album design." Many times, that appointment is even scheduled before the wedding takes place. Jeff and Kathleen try to get the couple in as quickly as possible to maintain their production schedules. "The great thing about digital is that we can photograph a wedding on Saturday, design the album on Tuesday, and have it in production before the out-of-town guests (or the couple, in the case of destination weddings) even leave the area. That's exciting!" says Kathleen.

Album Design and Production

"We primarily use Art Leather albums, but we also use Leather Craftsmen books for a magazine-like storybook. We find that by offering our brides these different products, we can increase our sales," says Kathleen. They also sell two- and three-volume sets.

"To lay out true storybooks we design a one-of-a-kind book with no templates." Creative page layouts, along with different colors of books and materials, give each bride lots of choices. Jeff and Kathleen lay out the books first; then the couple comes to the studio or the album is posted online to be proofed and approved. "We let them know from the minute they walk through the door that we are going to help them design this book and not leave them hanging," explains Kathleen. "We realize that this is going to be a family heirloom, and we want it to be as complete and as professional as possible. Once they see how the photographs lay out, they want it." Because the bride gets input in the design process, when she receives her album, it's exactly what she envisioned.

Final Thoughts

"I think you have to educate yourself," says Kathleen. "Know your competition. Don't come into an area and underprice everybody. That's doing a disservice to the whole industry. Call around and be up front with it. Introduce yourself to the competition—some of your best referrals may come from them. Work on your style and decide which way you are going to go. With today's technology, the digital route is really an ideal way of working, because it allows so much more freedom and creativity. Don't just be a photographer; be a photographic artist."

CHAPTER SIX

Ken Sklute

www.kensklute.com

Ken Sklute began his photography career at the racetrack—at the age of fourteen. Initially taking photos to prove to his friends that he actually was at the track, he later showed the images to drivers and began selling prints. "I fell in love with drag racing," says Ken. "I panned with an Instamatic and I didn't even know what I was doing, but the results were what they had to be." Before too long, he was made the official track photographer

Then, at the age of sixteen, he made the seemingly bizarre transition from racing to weddings. "Actually, it was a natural progression," Sklute says with a laugh. "During the winter (off-season for drag racing) I met a wedding photographer and asked if I could come with him. He said yes. I went to weddings with him for three months, then booked a wedding for myself—so I had a deadline to learn everything by."

Sklute shot more weddings on his own until he caught the attention of a catering establishment with a large studio, which handled as many as eleven weddings at a time. Ken was guaranteed two weddings per weekend, all year long. The transition to wedding photography turned out not to be much of a stretch: one of Ken's first award-winning prints was of a bride and groom on a motorcycle using that panning technique he first used at the track. "I was panning at 1/15 second," he recalls. "The bride's garter was showing, her veil was blowing, and the church was in the background. That shot came right out of motor sports photography."

Listing all of Ken's awards individually would leave no room for learning how he produces his stunning wedding albums. Now in his forties, Ken has been named Wedding Photographer of the Year twenty-four times and won the Wedding Album of the Year award ten times from the Long Island PPA and the Phoenix PPA. He has also been awarded thirteen Kodak Gallery Awards and fourteen Fuji Masterpiece Awards. In 2001, Ken won the prestigious Kodak Gallery Elite Award first place. It was the first time it was ever given for a wedding album. Ken also provided the images for the second edition of *Professional Techniques for the Wedding Photographer* by George Schaub (published by AmPhoto). Additionally, he is a speaker who is very much in demand.

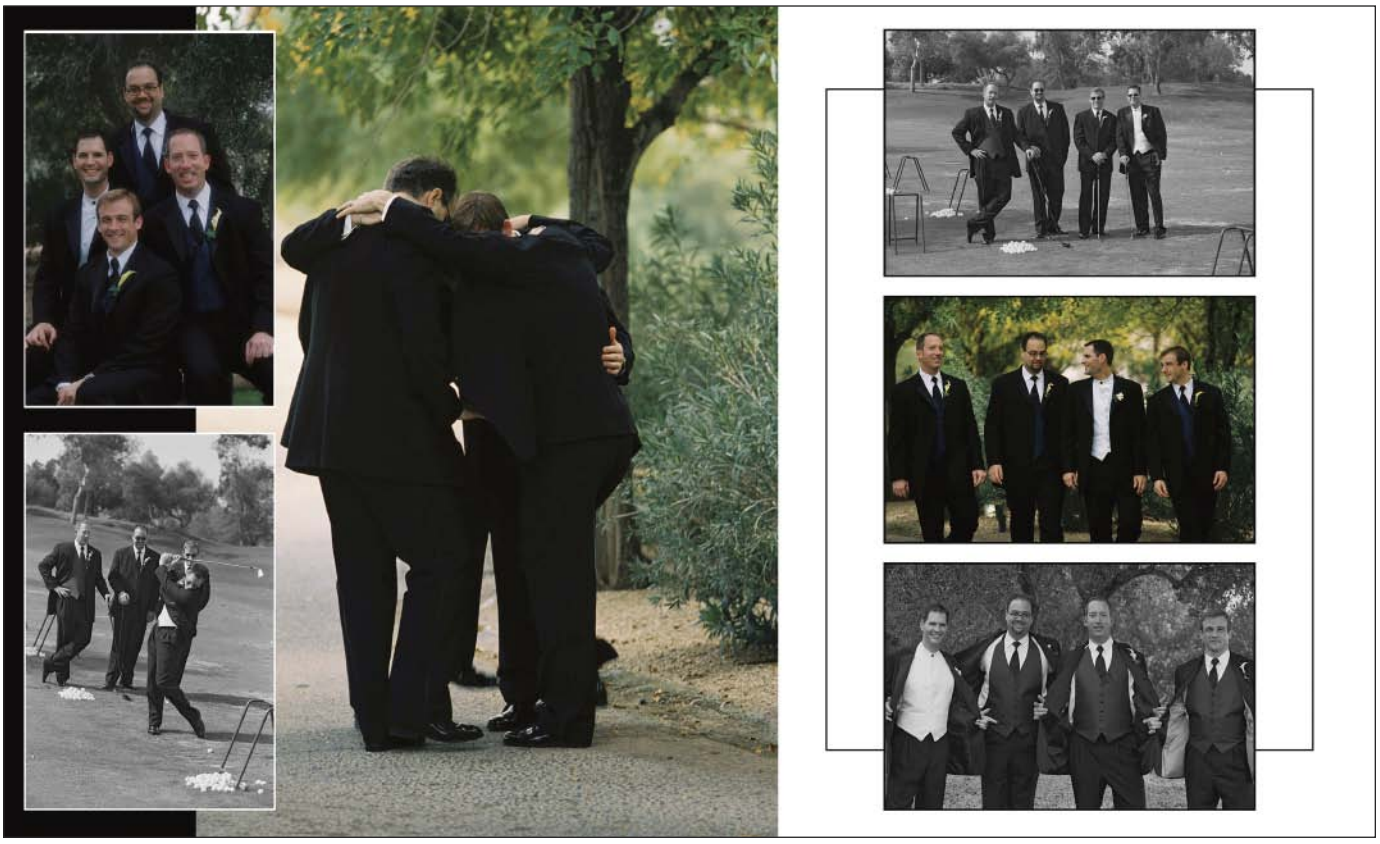
"People have a hard time visualizing the final product; by showing different styles of books, you find out what their taste is."

Engagement Session and Consultation

For Ken, the sales process begins with his first interactions with the client. "I do a planning session that coincides with an engagement session. Sitting with people during an engagement session, I familiarize myself with

their tastes and start setting up a game plan for how I'm going to work," says Ken.

Doing photographs before the wedding also ensures that Ken's clients are comfortable with him and that he knows what their challenges might be. Ken believes that any people photography you do will be better the second time around, and feels that an engagement session breaks the tension of a couple standing in front of the camera



for the first time. According to Ken, when the couple sees the results of a photo shoot before the wedding, they are also more apt to cooperate on the day of the wedding. This leads to better images, which leads to better sales.

The engagement session also gives him a point of reference when designing a timeline for the wedding day. "We talk about the importance of being on time. If the bride is a half hour or an hour late the day of the wedding, there won't be enough time to capture a lot of the images she wants," he notes.

"If the bride is . . . late the day of the wedding, there won't be enough time to capture a lot of the images she wants."

Ken is also working with a videographer to create a Day-in-the-Life engagement session that is shot in a lifestyle fashion. The stills are combined with interviews and sold to the clients as a DVD. The final product is being edited in Adobe Premiere. Many clients use it as a slide show at the wedding. This draws on the idea that photographers will someday be shooting with the same gear as videographers as the resolution of video cameras continues to increase.

Sales and Marketing

Ken starts selling his wedding albums as soon as he meets the couple. In the initial interview, he shows samples of the types of books he wants to sell. That's when the seeds are planted to sell a 120- to 150-image book. "Samples are the most important tool," says Ken. "People have a hard time visualizing the final product; by showing different styles of books, you find out what their taste is. This is where you reinforce your sale in the number of photographs that you show. To sell big you have to show big," he says with a grin. "Photography studios have always shown big prints—30x40 inches—in order to sell them. It works the same way with an album. If you show a thirty-image album, that's what you'll sell. So the various sample albums I have tend to be big fatties with 120 to 150 photos."

Pricing

Ken's pricing is based on hours of coverage and quantity of photographs. He books an initial amount of time and number of pictures for the album. "When I explain this to the couple, I let them know that both items can be amended. Many people are used to picking a package and staying with it. You may increase shooting time because you can't really see how much time is needed. But more than that, you can't really see how many photographs it's going to take to complete the narrative of the wedding. Although the couple may prepurchase fifty or seventy pictures, they might actually end up with ninety or hundred to really tell the story." Ken looks at his sales as two-fold process. Initially, he books the job at the level where the people feel comfortable with what they are getting for a set amount of money. He thinks of this as a minimum, though. Ultimately, the number of photographs in a book will be determined by the kind of day, the subjects' cooperation, the time available, and the type of party. All become factors in creating the final product.

Workflow

For Sklute's clients there are no paper proofs. Instead, his images are posted on-line the day after the wedding, using www.morephotos.com. Some images are converted to black & white, but Ken shoots JPEGs and is careful to be accurate with his exposure and white balance, so most of the the images are pretty much ready to go straight out of the camera. Once the files are uploaded, an e-mail is sent to the bride and groom so that they can view the images during the honeymoon. Within the web site, they can create a favorites folder—and Ken suggests they pick from the heart and not worry about numbers. There is a two-step click feature that allows clients to zoom in on each image. Ken really likes the fact that Morephotos wraps their design seamlessly into your web site.

Once Sklute sees their selections he fills in any gaps that customers have left in the storyline. Then, two meetings are held. At the first, they go over all the selections, discuss and reaffirm what type of album they like, and go over details of finishing, such as the use of images and text on the cover. Then the album is designed. In the second meeting, the clients view the design on a large monitor in a slide show set to music. Ken finds that ninety percent of the design is usually approved as is; for the other ten percent, he addresses any of their concerns.

"I use Yervant's Page Gallery software because it's remarkably user-friendly," says Ken. "The ease of use is wonderful—it's drag and drop. When I can't find a design I want, I use Photoshop to supplement the pro-

gram's page designs. Most couples have no idea what their final book can look like. That comes back to us being artists, and at the same time wearing another hat—that of salesman. When clients come in with a structured number of photographs, they very often leave out some important storytelling pictures or really nice pictorials or panoramas because they are too small in the proofs for them to visualize. It takes a little client education to design a great album. This ultimately increases the sale."

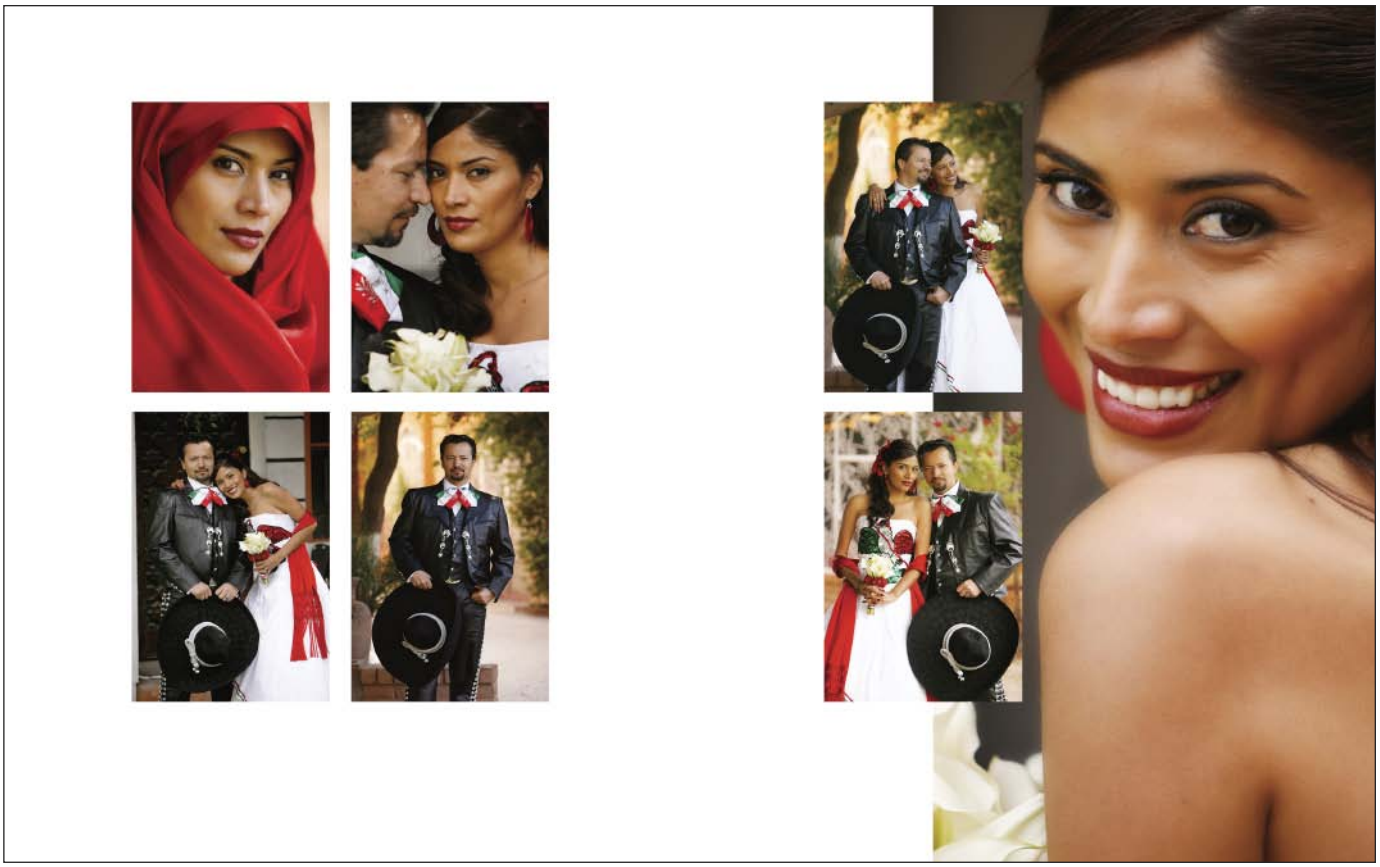
Album Production

"For traditional albums I'm using Capris, who produce a really clean, fine product," says Ken. "I also work with the Australian John Garner Bookcrafts, because he's the epitome of creativity and has the best attitude and customer service that I've ever experienced. I don't use any slip-in types of books at all. I find magazine-style albums are very popular, digitally produced with multiple images on a single print. There might be two, three or fifteen images on a page."

Final Thoughts

What specific advice does Ken have for photographers? "Show big! You need samples you're proud of, that are complete, tell a story, aren't redundant, and are tasteful. Large, well-made sample albums are the basis of your sales. When you package the big album as an end product, you'll also recognize it gives you a storyboard for what you need to capture on the wedding day. Then you have those elements there to sell. It works hand in hand."

"Use storytelling elements," Sklute continues. "You need an opening, middle, and a close. Photographers often forget about the opening and close and get right to the meat of it. An opening might be an engagement session or some details of where the event is taking place, maybe someone getting dressed. Closings are often sunset, evening, or twilight shots. Don't forget elements like signs, flowers, or the ceremony site being set up. Anything people spend dollars on, you want to document. Above all, capture emotion. If you shoot in sequences, you can sell multiple images. Grab that security shot and



then wait for the expression. Capturing emotion will tell a story, and getting everyone excited will sell images."

Ken also suggests, when designing the album, to avoid mixing color and black & white prints on a single page or spread. Ken also recommends using a timeline sheet that covers all of the details of the day. This helps get everyone where they need to be when they need to be there and saves valuable shooting time.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Michael Ayers

www.theayers.com

Michael Ayers got his photography start back in high school. He was going out west with the Boy Scouts to the Philmont Scout Reservation in New Mexico and wanted to buy binoculars, since the views were so spectacular. His dad suggested a nice camera instead; not only could he look at distances with a zoom lens, but with a photo he could remember what it looked like forever. "I bought the camera," says Michael. "The next thing I know, I'm doing stuff in college for the Ohio State University newspaper for fun. A friend asked me to photograph her wedding because the photographer cancelled. I was a civil engineering student at the time and didn't really want to, but I finally agreed. The bride said I did a wonderful job, but I realized just how little I knew about wedding photography. Between semesters at Ohio State University, I went to the Winona School in Chicago to learn more about photography.

"I began wondering if I really wanted to sit behind a computer the rest of my life, since engineering work was changing from drafting tables to computers," Michael recalls. He liked the interaction with people that came from photography, and knew that he could also be his own boss. "Now, eighteen years later, I sit behind a computer for what looks like the rest of my life," he laughs. (Recently, however, Michael has come up with a solution. Check out the section on album production [page 52] to learn more.)

Michael has received numerous awards for his photography and album design, the highlight of which was the 2001–02 International Photographer of the Year Award from WPPI; he was also the recipient of the 2001 United Nations' Leadership Award. Ayers and his unique techniques have been featured in numerous magazines, and he has personally shared his techniques with over fifty-thousand people.

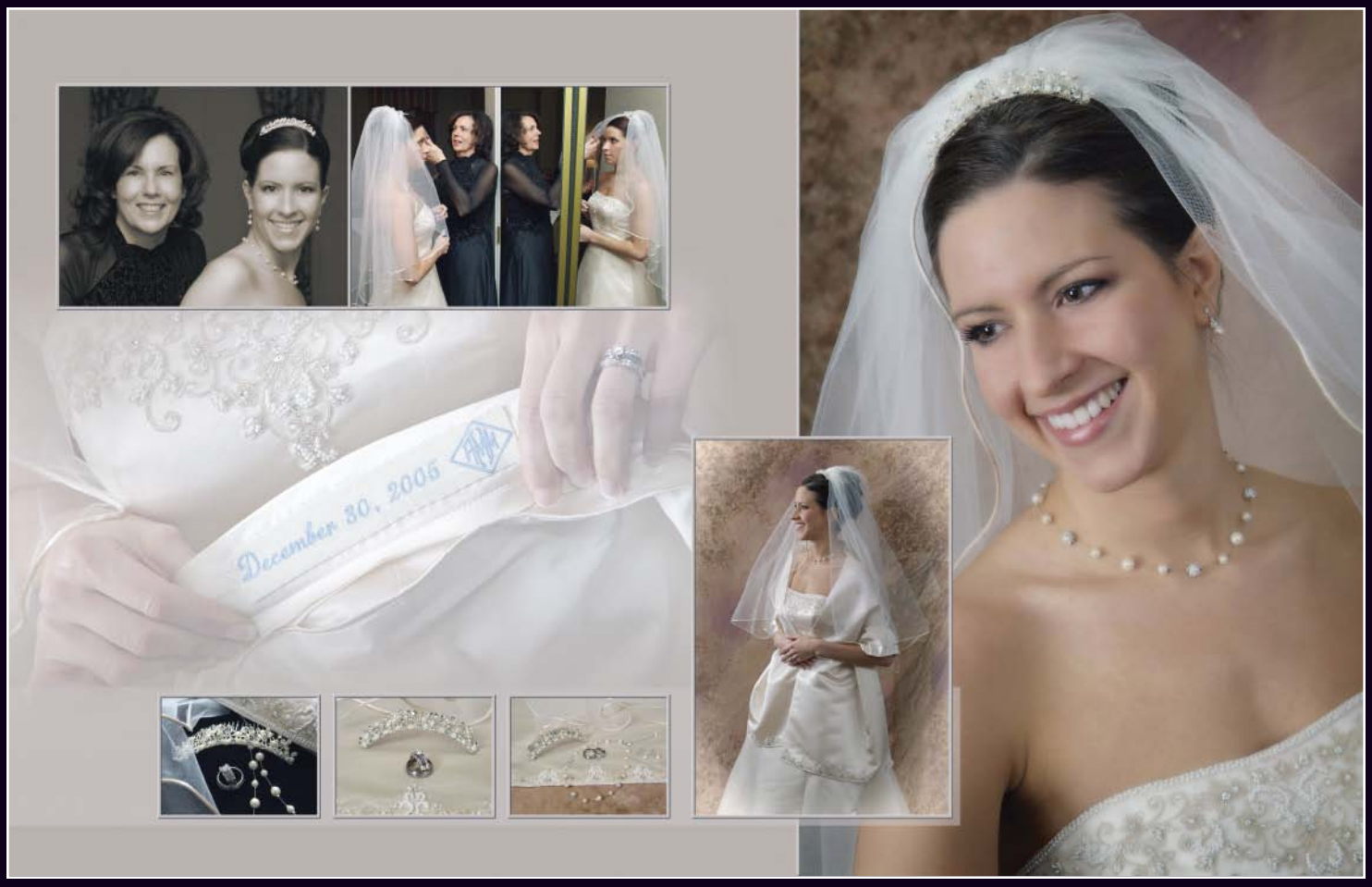
Attracting Clients

How does Michael acquire his business? "Almost everything is referral and marketing. We haven't used paid advertising in many, many years. I do hand out business cards, but I don't consider that advertising; I consider that a contact method. Many of our brides hear about us because I hand out wallet schedules to our clients and they give them out. Their picture is on it and on the back is my business card. I also have my web site listed on everything," he says.

"Even if my clients choose the bottom of the pricing scale, they still get the best photography we can offer."

The Consultation and Pricing

Michael's first meeting with the couple starts with talk about what they are going to spend. According to him,


December 30, 2006

Angie

"When clients see the quality of our work and our customer service, if they can get over that hurdle of price, they are ours. We do give them some information on price over the phone, because I don't want to waste time once they are in the studio. When they see an album, though, chances are they are going to be signing up with us." Ayers stresses that the couple isn't just buying photography, they are buying service. "Once we get one bride in the family, we seem to get all her sisters as well."

Pricing at the Ayers Incorporated Studio is straightforward. "We give them a final price up front," says Michael. "We tell them what they are going to spend, grand total—unless they are dreaming things up that they want to buy, such as a gigantic wall portrait. While I'd love to sell those, most people don't buy prints that large; it happens, but not very often—at least not in the Midwest." Michael makes a strong point here in his studio's philosophy. "There is no 'good,' 'better,' or 'best.' If my clients choose the bottom of the pricing scale, they still get the best photography we can offer. We stress that each couple will get top-quality images no matter what they spend. They get everything they would expect to get from a great wedding photographer, even at the lowest price range." The Ayers' coverage ranges from five to eight hours, and they are usually there for the duration. If the couple is planning an all-day, all-night wedding, the lowest price range is not available. "I've been fortunate enough to photograph weddings in twenty-four states in the past three years, but most of our weddings are typical weddings in a church with gorgeous receptions. The difference in the price is in the type of album we deliver. All the albums are the best that we can deliver; some are just simpler than others."

"All the albums are the best that we can deliver; some are just simpler than others."

After talking price, Michael shows the couple sample albums, which are just like the albums going out the door. "They look at the albums and, even if they don't want such an elaborate album, they know that creativity abounds in this place and that's what we are after. Then it's time to talk payment. We've got them in the door.

"I started to realize that if I was getting my meals served at my keyboard and away from my family, then I was too far gone!"

We've got them reserved. Our policy is that everything, absolutely everything, must be paid for in advance. If it isn't paid for, it isn't reserved. We even give little incentives to pay early, but anything we give away is designed to help the studio. For example, a hundred free wallet photos would have my name and address on the back."

Album Design

"I design my album in the viewfinder as I create the photographs," says Michael. "I decide how I want my pages to look, what I am going to have fold open, or where the crease is going. I picture every little last detail as I create the images in the view-finder. The images are made for specific architectural reasons in the album."

Album Production

Within the past two years, Michael realized that he would have to change the way his albums were manufactured to keep up with the latest trends in the wedding industry. New album companies have been emerging out of the woodwork over the past few years, and many have moved to the forefront in spite of quality and customer service issues. These companies, in Michael's opinion, are market fads. High-quality bound albums will, he feels, continue to be in high demand by today's exacting brides.

Once he switched to producing bound albums from digital images, however, Michael realized that he was beginning to live his life in front of the computer, again! "My thoughts jumped back to the endless years of late nights in my darkroom developing fiber-based black & white prints," says Michael. "The new darkroom is the computer room, and I started to realize that if I was getting my meals served at my keyboard and away from my family, then I was too far gone!"

Michael's solution to this dilemma came when he started having professional graphic designers lay out his albums. A friend from the Chicago area started a company called the Album Designer Network (ADN), built on creativity, quality, and completeness in a timely fashion. "It all boils down to customer satisfaction and results—and these are fantastic albums!" says Michael with great enthusiasm.

Using this system, the couple chooses images and supplies a list via fax or e-mail. The photographer then uploads the images to the ADN web site and specifies options for the finished album's construction. Michael's album company, GP Albums, is one of ADN's preferred album manufacturers, so he can look at exactly how the finished cover will look. Pricing is also automatically tabulated as the options are chosen (and the wholesale costs can be turned off if a customer is present in the studio).

In about ten working days an e-mail arrives from ADN with notification that the design is ready for review with a password. The couple is notified and logs on, with the photographer, to ADN. "We look at the virtual album page by page and I highlight some of my favorite features," explains Michael. "If there are any changes, I note them below each page in a special text box on the web site. I've found that there is seldom a need for any changes; often I can hear the bride getting very emotional on the other end of the phone line—my best indication of success!"

Once approved, images are printed at H&H Color Lab on Fuji Professional Paper (the official ADN printer and also Michael's studio lab). Then prints are shipped back to the ADN for final numbering before going to the album company. GP Albums then completes the binding of the album pages and cover before shipping it to Michael's studio.

The economic results and labor impact have been amazing to Michael. Prior to having professional graphic designers create his albums, Michael spent about twenty

hours per album creating pages and artwork in Photoshop and other graphic programs. By switching to ADN, he has freed up a great deal of time to do additional sessions and focus on sales in his studio. He easily makes up the cost of having the album professionally designed with just one small family portrait session.

However, says Michael, "The biggest impact has been more time with my young family. The kids can tell that I'm less stressed and more fun to be around, especially during the busy holiday season, when every wedding couple tends to place last-minute album orders. For me, my studio, my clients, and my family, it's a win-win-win-win!"

Presenting the Album

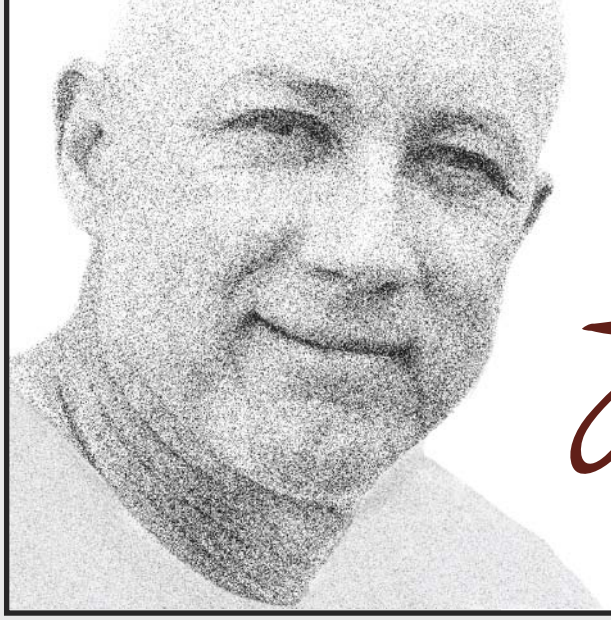
"When the couple comes to view the finished product, we do a white glove presentation. We use white gloves, because we want them to realize how incredibly valuable this book is. This is a priceless piece of artwork," says Michael. "Clients sit on a comfortable sofa and I sit on a chair right in front of them, turning the pages of the album. By the end of the book, they are usually crying. After the presentation we box it up and carry it out to the car." When they leave with their album, Michael plants the seed for more sales. "We let them know that this is just the beginning. We want to be photographing their family album one day."

Final Thoughts

Ayers's advice for fellow photographers is to write down their goals. He personally keeps photos of his wish list—whether it's a new house, piece of equipment, or new car—posted in a prominent place. The pictures and written goals help to keep him focused.

"Go to some of the week-long schools like Winona (in Chicago) or the West Coast School of Photography." Michael continues, "Go every year until you are proficient in your photography. If you can afford to, go around the country to attend more than one."

Last, but not least, Michael says, "Never take advice from people who are not where you want to be. Make sure they are making it financially!"



CHAPTER EIGHT

Joe Buissink

www.joebuissink.com

In 1993, Joe Buissink was working on a PhD in neuropsychology at UCLA and realized that when he graduated he would be in his mid-to-late fifties, earning a living by sixty, with retirement three or four years later. "I decided to think of something else I could do that I would feel passionate about. Turns out it was photography, but I never considered wedding photography. In my mind's eye I considered wedding photography the lowest rung of photography's food chain. But when I shot my first wedding I realized that it's an amazing job. Wedding photographers do amazing work. They take a lot of risk and people should give them credit for it."

"I had photography as a hobby," he says. "I did landscapes. It's one of the things I used to do in the desert: take a camera, hang out a couple of days, and not think about school. I never sold any prints. It was just for fun." Then, Joe attended two friends' weddings and came away from both wishing he had had a camera, because the photographers, as diligent as they were about doing formals, seemed to miss the entire wedding that was going on behind them. "I would have been shooting the behind-the-scenes stuff," says Joe. "If I were the bride, and twenty years down the line I wanted to look at my photo album, I wouldn't necessarily want to see all of the posed images. Most brides have forgotten everything that went on by the day after. They need the photographs to bring back memories and give them information that is missing about their wedding." Joe's goal is to give them '40s and '50s *Life*-magazine style and quality.

"I've never been formally trained as a photographer; I've never taken classes of any sort. Mostly it's been trial and error," says one of the most in-demand wedding photographers today. In fact, Joe photographed his first two or three weddings for free in order to build a portfolio. He made 11x14-inch black & white prints mounted to 16x20-inch custom boards, which he used as a portfolio box to show work to get his first paying wedding-photography jobs.

"Wedding photographers do amazing work. They take a lot of risk and people should give them credit for it."

In the years since those humble beginnings, Buissink has been awarded the International Leadership Award in Photography by the International Photographic Council at the United Nations. He has also received numerous grand award prizes from WPPI. In 2004, Joe was selected to shoot Kodak's International campaign for their Portra film line. His work has also appeared in numerous books and is published regularly in magazines like *InStyle, Studio Photography and Design*, and *Vogue*.

Marketing

The vast majority of Joe's clients come via referrals; he never advertises and doesn't intend to. Joe has, however,

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frequently been interviewed on television. "That's the work of my publicist," explains Joe. "I actually sought it out, because once I started speaking and doing workshops all over the country, I realized I had built a name—

"I give her a basic idea of what she will be running into. If my fees do not suit her budget, there is no point in continuing."

but only within my peer group. That's not going to attract a lot of brides outside the referrals I get from photographers. It got me this far, but I wanted to expand and have the general public be aware of who I am."

To make this leap, he called a public relations firm who he had heard was very good. "They had never represented a wedding photographer before but wanted to figure something out," he says. "They did a media tour and got me on as many television programs as they could." This area was targeted because Joe already had a presence in magazines. In a matter of two months, he was on many different shows. He received many e-mails and inquiries—and was even hired for a job in Italy because the client saw him on *Good Morning America*.

Sales and Customer Service

Joe's first contact with the bride is usually on the phone. "She calls me and tries to find out how much I charge. I try not to discuss specific fees over the phone; instead, I give her a basic idea of what she will be running into. If my fees do not suit her budget, there is no point in continuing," explains Joe. "However, if it's close enough, I ask her to come in so I can show my work. I meet her to see if we are a good fit. Unbeknownst to brides, I interview them to make sure that I am the right person for the job. If there's not a good personality mix, I'll refer them to another photographer. While sitting across from me, I

show them an 11x14-inch portfolio. All the prints are matted and each has a story with it. After going through twenty to forty images, I say 'Now I need you to see a whole wedding, because I don't want you to walk away without realizing that I do this quality of work for the entire wedding.' I might show them two or three sample albums with different styles. All my samples are Leather Craftsmen two-volume sets. I sell two- to three-volume sets all the time. My brides and grooms tend to select about 150 to 200 images." Joe also uses GraphiStudio coffee-table books.

Pricing

"I shoot for seven hours for $12,000, which includes a lead shooter as I capture all the candid moments. Albums run $4,000 to $6,000." says Joe. "That's seven hours of unobtrusive, nonstop shooting. I would guess that formal sessions are about fifteen to twenty minutes long at each wedding. And those poses are mostly for Mom."

Album Design

Joe shoots digital and still shoots black & white film, because his clients can tell the difference between hand-printed darkroom fiber prints and digital prints. For proofing, the images are produced as sloppy-border 3x5-inch prints. These are arranged in chronological order and boxed. "I tie a ribbon around them, and I might imbed a nice image on the outside cover."

Joe then tells the couple, "Take them and have fun. I don't care if they get mixed up, because the back of the print always has the roll and frame number. They give me all their favorites—and the leftovers, because I know that when my printer gets hold of some of my images, he will make outrageous prints." Sometimes Joe's clients won't

get the album selections back to him for a year or more. He has no problem with that. "The albums seem to grow larger the longer the images are out. Friends and family add their ideas for the album by saying 'Oh, you don't have the picture of . . .', and the number of images and pages in the album grow," explains Joe.

"When I lay out an album, I start with their favorites and then put in ones that I think are hot."

Buissink credits his black & white printer for helping to create and maintain his style. "He develops the film visually using a green safelight. All prints are then custom printed on archival paper. When he makes prints, he uses creative dodging and burning, sometimes bending the paper from corner to corner while exposing it under the enlarger. He'll also do creative toning that I would never have thought would work, but turns a good print into a stunning print."

Then it's layout time. "I produce the albums. I'm a Leather Craftsmen freak for my traditional albums. When I lay out an album, I start with their favorites and then put in ones that I think are hot," says Joe. "Most of the time, the clients will leave out detail shots that I know are nice little segues or mental pauses." Anything redundant is removed. Prints are laid out upon and pasted onto a sketchpad, which is given to the bride.

When approved, Joe makes them sign off on it before printing the final images. "If they change their minds later, it's their nickel," Joe explains. "Once they are all custom printed, the couple comes back to me and I show them the final prints. If they want a dress to be a deeper color or have any other requests, I make notes on the back of the prints and I redo the ones that need tweaking." They sign off on the final prints, then he ships them to Leather Craftsmen for binding.

As Joe further dips his toes into digital waters, shooting about a 50/50 ratio of film to digital, he has also begun using digital albums. "Yeah, I'm going there," he says. "I'm laying out albums digitally and doing these flush-mount books that I like. By adding the GraphiStudio books, I'm giving clients their choice. But still, the way the work is presented doesn't quite come up to the level of a double-weight, fiber-based print done optically by hand by some genius in a darkroom who does this dance around his enlarger. It's not the same. That's how I got here so that's not going to go away."

Final Thoughts

Joe advises, "Don't get stuck in a comfort zone and let the fear factor keep you from doing something different. Step out. If it means you do something different in increments, then do that. Do what you feel is safe and comfortable, but then grab a roll of film and just shoot it for yourself. If it happens to come out nicely, you might want to show it to the bride. Play a little bit. Experiment. Go beyond what your comfort level will allow you to do. I play at every wedding. I'm just a little kid in a candy store, playing all the time. I get nervous to this day right before getting to the site; I'm a bundle of nerves. It's a wonderful feeling—I can't wait to get in there and play. Be open-minded, take risks, and trust yourself."

Buissink also suggests networking and spending time with other wedding photographers. "I guarantee that if you start referring each other, you are going to get more referrals from other photographers than you could ever get from a hotel or a wedding coordinator. It behooves us not to say 'you can't see my work' or backstab and bad-mouth other photographers. When you bad-mouth another photographer, it really speaks ill of you. Connect with each other. Share your work. Know that there are differences."

CHAPTER NINE

Kevin and Clare Kubota

www.kkphoto-design.com

Kevin was inspired by his dad while in his teen years. "He was a great candid photographer who kept our home filled with storytelling black & white images. They must have rubbed off on me," Kevin says with a smile. "I didn't decide to make photography a career until about 1989 when I found myself unemployed and looking for something creative to do. I took some portraits of my roommate and they came out well enough that her friends also began to ask for portraits. Thus my career was born!"

Kevin got into wedding photography when he had his own wedding photographed in 1992 and became friends with his photographer, George Carranza, of Torrance, CA. "He really got me jazzed about weddings and they became my main focus from that point on."

Kevin holds PPA's Photographic Craftsman designation and many speaking merits. Kevin was also a very early adopter of digital, and suffering the trials and tribulations of this transition gave him the knowledge to start helping others get a grip on digital technology. This led to the development of Kevin's Digital Boot Camps, a series of workshops that also spawned instructional DVDs and his book from Amherst Media, titled *Digital Photography Boot Camp: A Step-by-Step Guide for Professional Wedding and Portrait Photographers* and released in its second edition in 2008.

Kevin was also selected by *American Photo Magazine* as one of the top-ten wedding photographers in the world—which came as a surprise to him. "To be recognized by your peers in the industry, and to be included in the company of all the other very talented photographers who were selected, is quite an honor," he says.

Workflow and Proofing

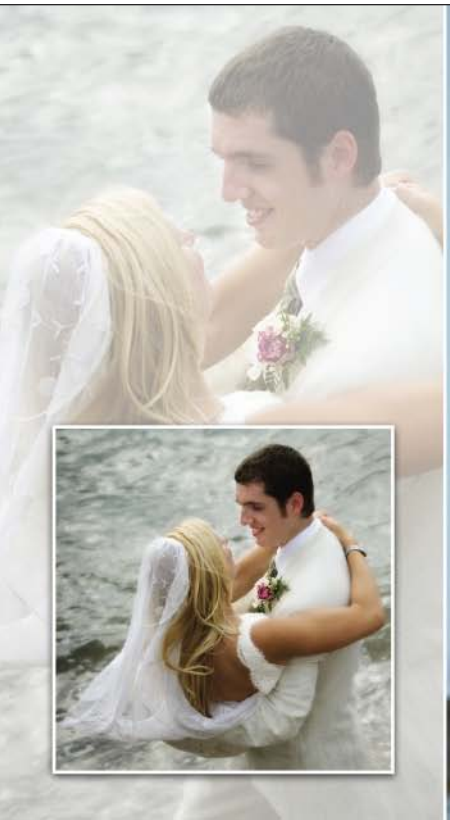
Kevin describes his workflow. "I capture all images in RAW and import them into Adobe Lightroom. I do all my editing and basic image corrections and adjustments. Then I select a sampling of my favorite images to enhance in Photoshop. I use my Artistic Actions (www.kubotaimagetools.com) to beautify these selected images (usually about thirty to forty from a wedding)—we want our work to show at its best. We have also designed custom presets for Lightroom, so the rest of the images can be quickly adjusted and given a semi-custom look with very little effort. Then I batch process all the images—including the enhanced ones—to create proof-quality JPEG files for presentation. Our proofs look much, much better now that we've been shooting RAW and processing with the appropriate software."

"For many photographers, the album design process can be one of the most time intensive of the entire job."

Kevin's wife, Clare, explains the presentation process. "Our clients view their images via a big-screen slide

show." These shows, created using TalaPhoto, are the most powerful and effective way to make the initial impression. If clients are out of town and can't attend a viewing, then they are sent a DVD of the slide show (this is created by importing the TalaPhoto show into iDVD on the Mac). ProSelect is also used as a sales and presentation tool when there is an opportunity to sit with the client in the studio and sell, but this is a bit more for portrait sessions than weddings at the Kubotas' studio.

"The wedding images are on our web site as well, and we also give them a proof booklet to take home to help in the image selection process," adds Clare. This proof



booklet is an 8.5x11-inch spiral-bound, inkjet-printed book created in-house with twelve images per page.

Album Design

"We ask them to pick about a hundred of their favorite images and send us the list. Then we take that list of images and begin building an album design using our Auto Album program." Kevin developed Auto Album, which runs entirely within Photoshop, several years ago to quickly layout magazine-style albums. Kevin also occasionally modifies the individual pages in Photoshop to suit the images and keep the flow of the album going. Often, images are added or subtracted beyond what the client has selected if they feel it makes a better album.

The final step is creating a PDF file of the design to send or show the client for approval. "The client can then

suggest any changes, although there are usually very few if any, and we prepare the final files to be printed and bound," adds Clare.

"Don't forget the story telling quality of an album," says Kevin. "A successful filmmaker once said, 'It's all about the story,' and I think that holds true with photography and album design as well. Our clients don't always think about the story when selecting images for their albums. We have to help educate them. Add images that you think enhance or complete the story of the wedding day and your album will have more lasting value and will capture the interest of the viewers completely."

Album Production and Marketing

Asukabook and Leather Craftsmen are the binders of choice for Kubota PhotoDesign. Kevin selected Asukabook because couples love the look and quality of the coffee-table style. The printing is excellent and it has a contemporary feel. "We have been using Leather Craftsmen for years and some couples still want the traditional look of a leather bound book with mat-board pages," he says, noting that, "Both companies provide excellent customer service, which is very important to us when choosing suppliers."

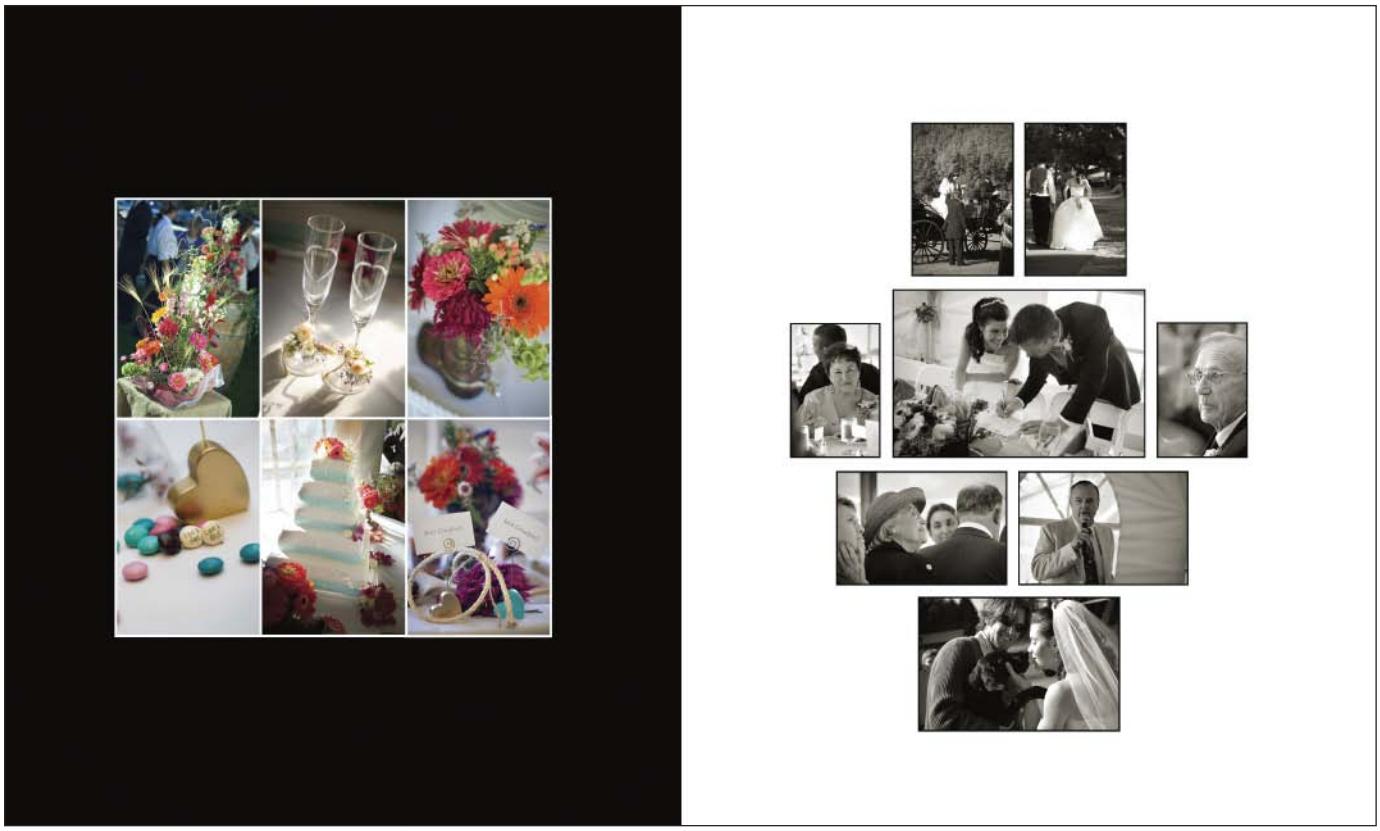
Wedding album prices range considerably depending on what type of book the client selects—anywhere from $200 for a mini-book, to $5,000 or more for a larger, more exotic album. "Albums are a lot of work, so make sure you charge for all your time working the images and designing the book," says Kevin. "If you don't have the time or skill to design albums, have someone else do it for you (or use software that aids in the process). It may seem costly, but it's well worth it. For many photographers, the album design process can be one of the most time intensive of the entire job."

"Add images that you think enhance or complete the story of the wedding day and your album will have more lasting value."

Kevin has found the Asukabook is a great add-on album when a customer has selected a traditional leather-bound album for their main book. The Asukabook is lightweight and contemporary—something clients love to take to work or family gatherings and show off. "It makes sense, from a marketing standpoint, to get one of these in their hands," says Kevin. "Even if we decide not to mark it up as much, it's a great marketing tool." To minimize the overhead in creating the Asukabook, Kevin says they simply make a copy of the couple's big leather

album, so most of the time-consuming work is already done. The Asukabook also makes a great parent album, and the Kubotas have found it's been quite easy for them to sell that way. "We also use the pocketbook sized 5x5-inch books to make miniature wedding albums, which are also great marketing products," adds Kevin.

Part showmanship and part protection from hand oils, the Kubotas always use white gloves when handling the



albums, both behind the scenes and with the client. This makes brides appreciate the quality and value even more. Clients are even presented with a clean pair of white gloves to take with their album.

Pricing

"We try to give our clients a very complete package and price before the event," says Kevin. "However, we often need to add images to an album design to make it more complete or valuable. Usually when they see their images, they end up wanting more than they originally imagined. Many times, parents will also see the albums, DVD, or preview book we have done and be so impressed that they decide they'd like a copy for themselves."

"When a parent indicates that they cannot really afford a full-blown leather book (like the Leather Craftsman), we suggest an Asukabook. This is generally affordable to everyone, yet still feels very contemporary and high end. We offer a variation of the couple's album and give parents the option to swap out some of the images. If we don't have to make many changes, there is very little additional work in creating the parent album. The mini 5x5-inch album is also popular with parents, because they can take it to social events easily and share it with friends—and it has our logo on it, of course, which is good for business!"

"Many times, parents will see the albums we have done and be so impressed that they decide they'd like a copy for themselves."

Additional Albums

Kevin feels that albums are for everyone—not just wedding couples. "We also sell albums to seniors, families with new babies, for pregnancy sessions, you name it," he says. "Don't limit yourself. Think of a way to include albums with everything. People love the idea of having a

completed album done for them. If you photograph it in such a way that you capture a story, or series of events, even from a portrait session, then you'll have a much easier time selling an album to present that story." He adds that engagement session albums are very popular and are used as either a guest book, which people sign, or simply displayed at the wedding for guests to enjoy.

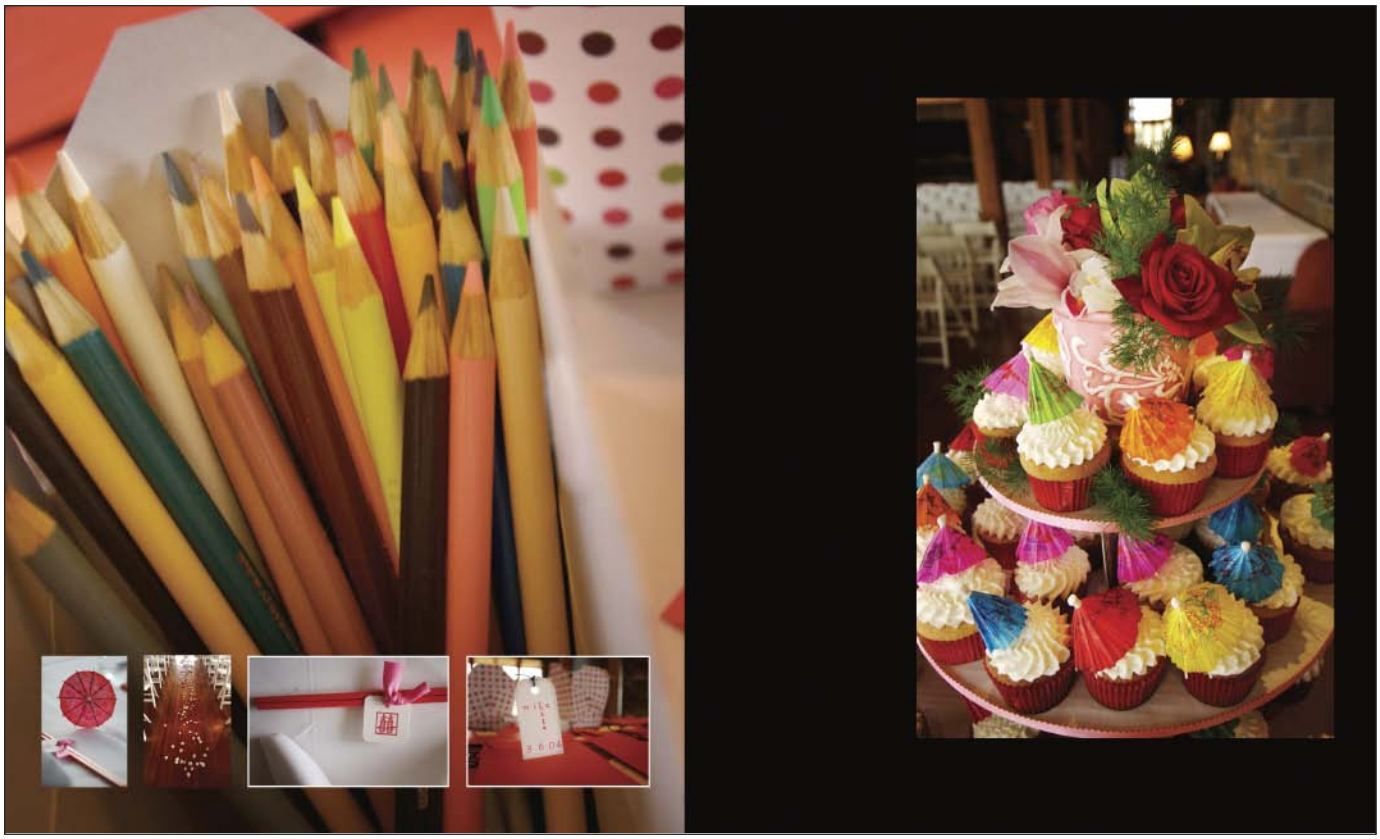
Final Thoughts

Kevin and Clare's approach is to capture spontaneous moments, maintaining as natural a feeling as possible while occasionally prompting poses or suggesting ideas to their clients. This captures them in a way that gives more of a relaxed or candid feel than the more formally setup images. "I do this by photographing couples when they are off-guard, and by using compositional elements that look natural or create a sense of a 'found' moment." The Kubotas work hard on practicing timing, using visualization exercises to increase their awareness and ability to freeze key moments.

Kubota ImageDesign's success has come by learning to balance their couple's approach to photography. In Kevin's words, "I look at five areas and work to develop and improve each equally: inspiration, style, technique, technology, and presentation. Photographers often limit themselves by ignoring areas they aren't necessarily comfortable in rather than working to improve those skills.

"I look at five areas and work to develop and improve each equally: inspiration, style, technique, technology, and presentation."

By making sure each area is consistently balanced, success will naturally come. I also believe that doing charity work on a regular, dedicated basis is essential to long-term business success and also a key element of the first of the five areas: inspiration."



CHAPTER TEN

Marie Labbancz

www.artofolove.com

Marie Labbancz started her photography career after working for eighteen years in health care administration while doing theatre at night and always feeling the pull of being creative. She started with a photography class at a community college when her son was in high school and found, from the first class, that she had natural composition skills. Some of her very first images from those classes were published in art magazines and that led to gallery shows. "That made me think this was something to pursue," smiles Marie.

"Initially I never considered weddings because I thought of them as cliché and not artistic. When my son got married, however, I checked out the wedding magazines, like *Martha Stewart*, and saw imagery there that changed my view. I did my first wedding for free and posted the images online. Twelve months later I had to quit my day job, because I was booked for so many weddings. It wasn't like I pursued it aggressively, but I really loved the beauty of weddings. It's a fantasy day. I love every detail and all the emotion. I think of women as goddesses on that day!"

Starting with all film, Marie moved to digital in 2005 as its quality improved and the advantages of a digital post-production workflow became clear. Marie has staked out the high-end of the market for her business and feels that *all* of the images captured on the wedding day are important, not just the hundred or so that appear in the album. As a result she spends a lot of time working on every image.

Workflow

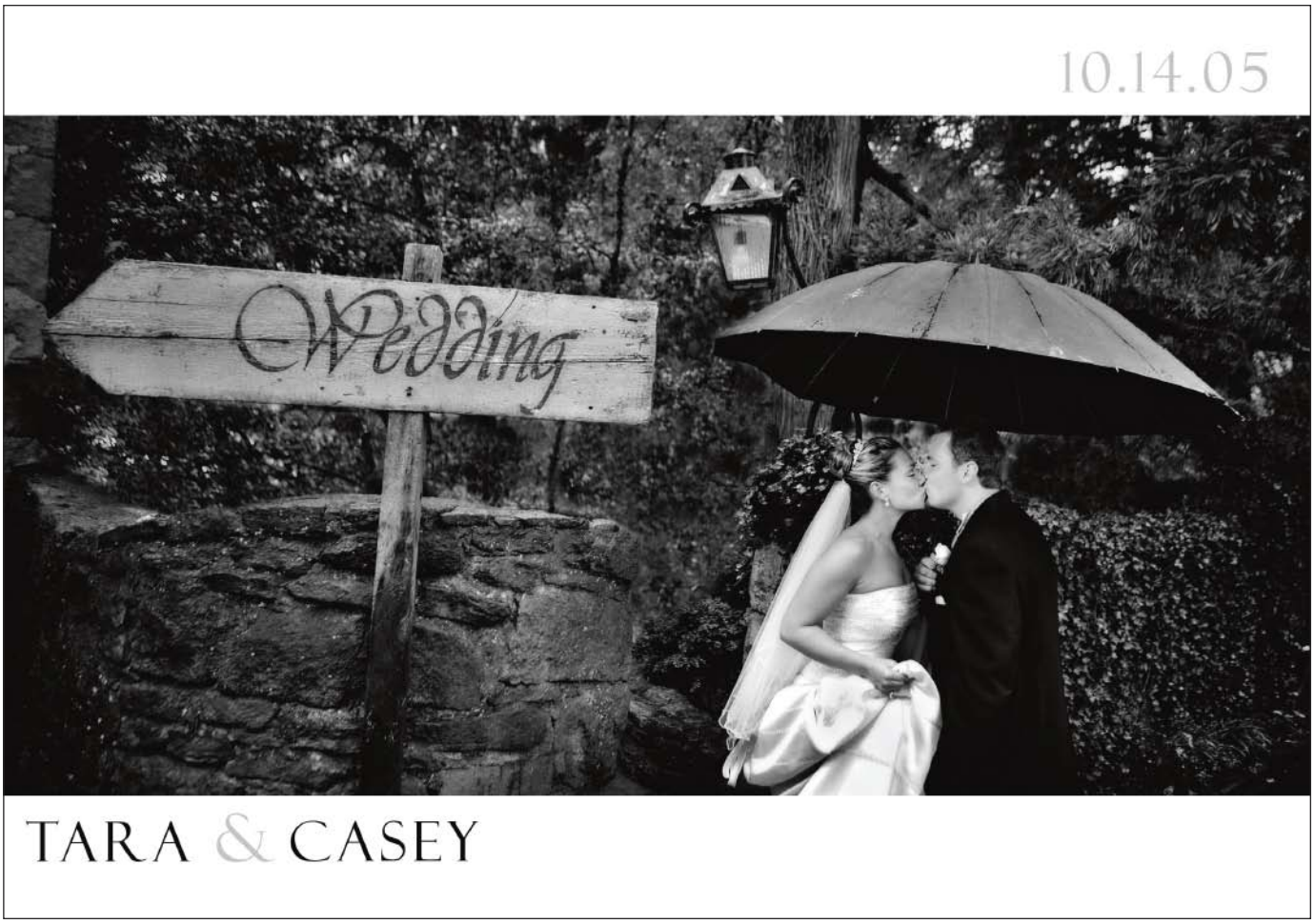
After the wedding, Marie's CompactFlash cards are downloaded and the images are loaded into Photo Mechanic (a stand-alone image browser), then backed up to an external hard drive. Marie shoots with three different cameras to avoid lens changes, and with assistant cameras as well, so the collected images are organized by time and date. Then, there's an initial edit to delete obvious rejects.

"Be friendly, get out there with your clone albums to networking meetings and visit with vendors."

In Photoshop, Marie uses scripts to preload all the images and cycle through them as she works. Actions are also assigned function keys so that they can be cued with a single keystroke. Even with these timesavers in place, however, it takes Marie a full day to process images.

This workflow may be intensive, compared to what other photographers use, but Marie's clients receive finished prints of the whole wedding not just the final picks. "I really believe the whole story is important," stresses Marie, "and my clients are paying for this time."

Marie's favorite wedding story highlights how important each and every image can be to our clients. There was a sweet older couple who met over the Internet. "It was a kind of a *Sleepless in Seattle* story, as he was in Seat-



tle and she was in New Jersey," tells Marie. "I got a call from the bride after she received their wedding album and she shared that her husband had just been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, but viewing the album images seemed to keep him going. She said, 'You'll never know what sharing that album with my husband and the memories meant to me.' Until then, I never really understood the impact an album could have—that it was *that* cherished by the couple."

Pricing

Marie charges her clients $6,000 for seven hours of coverage. This gets the client Marie's photography, with a second shooter, and their proofs. Albums are additional and vary from $1,600 to $5,000 using Leather Craftsmen, which is her clients' preferred choice. Other album-company choices include Queensberry from New Zealand, Jorgenson, and Cypress. Labbancz also uses Graphi-Studio, although she tends to use their service for self-promotion mini-books.

Marie's starter package includes a magazine-style proof album with nine images per 11x14-inch page. This usually ends up as two volumes because of the sheer number of images included, which is between twelve- and fifteen-hundred shots. Clients can upgrade to 3.5x5-inch proofs presented in a personalized archival album for an additional $800. The cost to the studio is the same either way, but this adds to the bottom line and has a higher perceived value to her brides.

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She also offers an engagement session package that includes a guest book and save-the-date cards with images from the session. Included is a Leather Craftsmen 7x10-inch book for $2000.

Album Design

Albums are designed using Photo Junction. "I love it because it was very easy for my staff to pick up," says Marie. "My staff does the original layout, then I go in and tweak

the pages." Their coffee-table style albums are started in Photo Junction, then saved as layered files so that final corrections and background additions can be made in Photoshop. Then the page files are sent over the Internet to the client for approval.

Marketing

"Design sample albums for the client you want to serve not the client that you have. That's the quickest route to getting the kind of sales you want," say Marie. "If you are going to do a volume business then design for that, if you want the high-end you need to have great albums."

Marie also notes that if you find your own unique style, then you don't have to compete on price—which is deadly. "Don't try to be all things to all people," she says.

Her final suggestion for staying at the top of your market is to stay fresh. "Design three new sample albums per year. This will keep your imagery fresh and on top of the new styles. Every photographer grows, and this needs to be shown—it's what sells you to the bride."

For self-promotion, Marie recommends having a "best of" book to show to vendors. When you build a relationship with a high-end caterer or florist, offer them albums. This may sound expensive, but not when you weigh it against the cost of advertising in magazines. Your images and album designs get directly into the hands of the high-end bride—and the bride doesn't see this as ad-

For self-promotion, Marie recommends having a "best of" book to show to vendors.

vertising, but more as a referral. "Be friendly, get out there with your clone albums to networking meetings, and visit with vendors," says Marie.

Editorial features are another thing Marie spends time on, as it's the best advertising for her style of photography. She ends up with weddings featured in ten magazines per year, and the tear sheets fill two albums that sit on her coffee table where clients can see them first thing. All this published material adds value to Marie Labbancz Photography—and more value justifies charging higher rates.

Final Thoughts

Marie's final words are these: "You only need to be a half decent photographer to make money, but you really need to be a great businessperson."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Martin Schembri

www.martinschembri.com.au

Martin Schembri got his start in photography by accident. He originally studied surveying, but hated it—in his opinion there were too many snakes around, and the work was generally very boring. Photography was a hobby for Martin, and when the opportunity came to apply for a job in baby photography, he got down on his knees and begged for the chance. "I guess the studio felt sorry for me and gave me the job," he laughs.

It soon became apparent that photography would become Martin's career. "Frankly, I couldn't see myself doing anything but holding a camera in my hand. The more I learned, the more exciting the profession became." The "baby photography stint," as he calls it, taught Martin much about patience and speed. Soon, a well-established Sydney photographer approached him to join in a partnership. The offer—photographing schools—was too good to refuse, and he worked with him for about four years. After much consideration, Schembri decided that it was time to move on and establish his own studio. He continued photographing schools under his own name, but became bored with the routine. He began accepting more requests to do portraits and weddings. "The funny thing is that after more than twenty-five years, the excitement is still there today," exclaims Martin.

Martin is a highly acclaimed photographer who holds a Double Master of Photography degree with the Australian Institute of Professional Photographers (AIPP), of which he has been a full member since 1985. Other awards include the New South Wales (his home state) Wedding Photographer of the Year and a bag full of Gold and Silver Awards from entering state and national competitions sponsored by the AIPP. Martin has also conducted national and international workshops and been featured in numerous magazine articles.

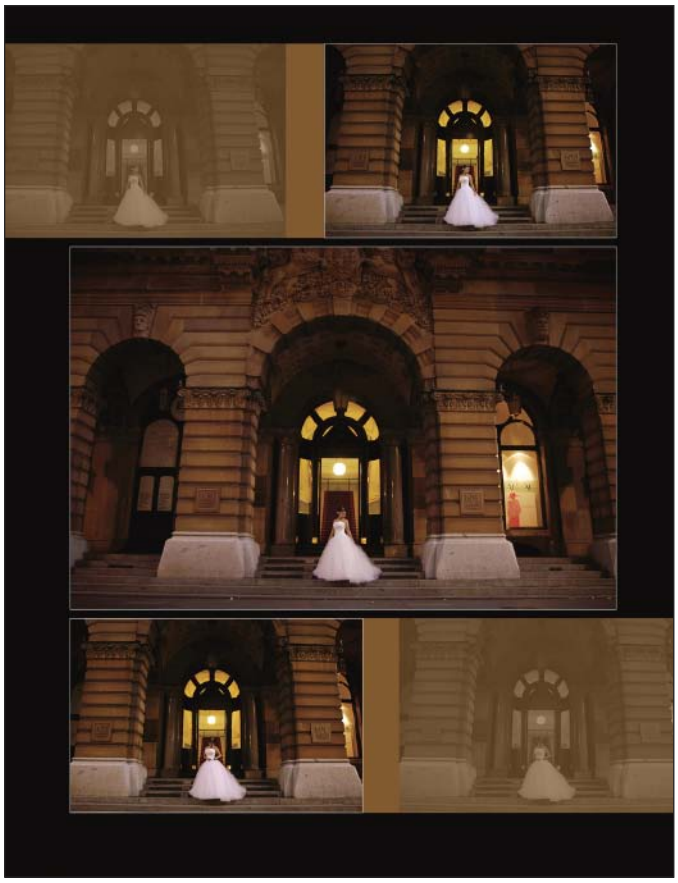
Marketing

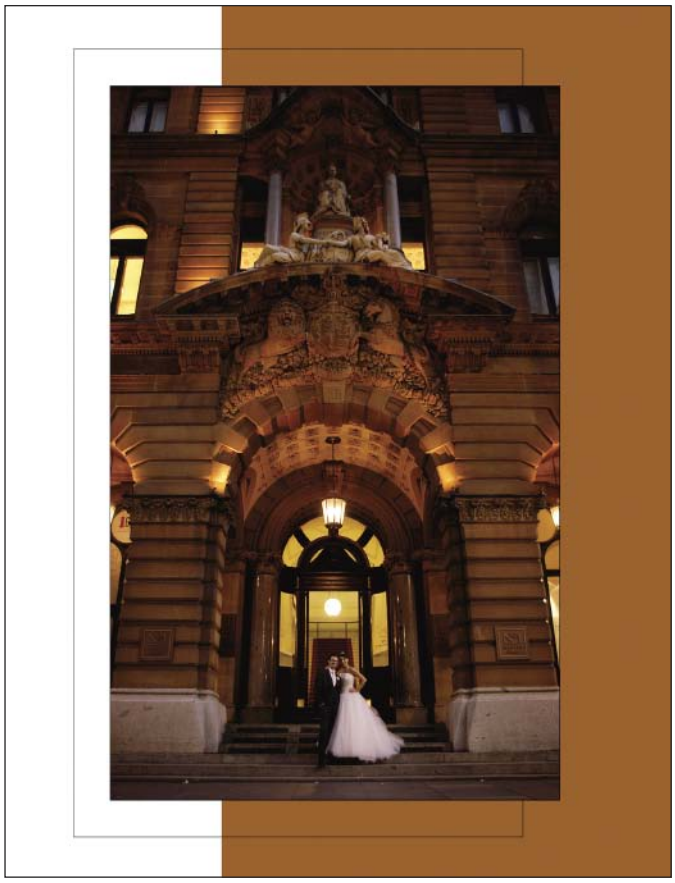
Martin markets his photography services through wedding magazines and the occasional bridal fair. However, he finds that about 70 percent of his work comes through referrals, which are generated by good service, quality work, and a very strong relationship with clients. He has tried different ways to generate more referrals, such as free prints and discounts, but found most clients referred him without any incentives and have continued a long relationship with the studio.

"Before the client comes in, I preselect the best images and design the best album possible."

Consultations and Customer Service

How does Martin handle the first contact with the bride? "We welcome the call with a positive and cheerful atti-





tude. After establishing the type of photography they require, we explain we have a strict policy of only photographing one wedding per day and assure them that I will personally photograph their wedding. How far in advance the wedding inquiry is made gives us a good indication of the client's outlook toward their wedding photography.

Engagement portraits are encouraged and usually included in their wedding packages at no extra charge.

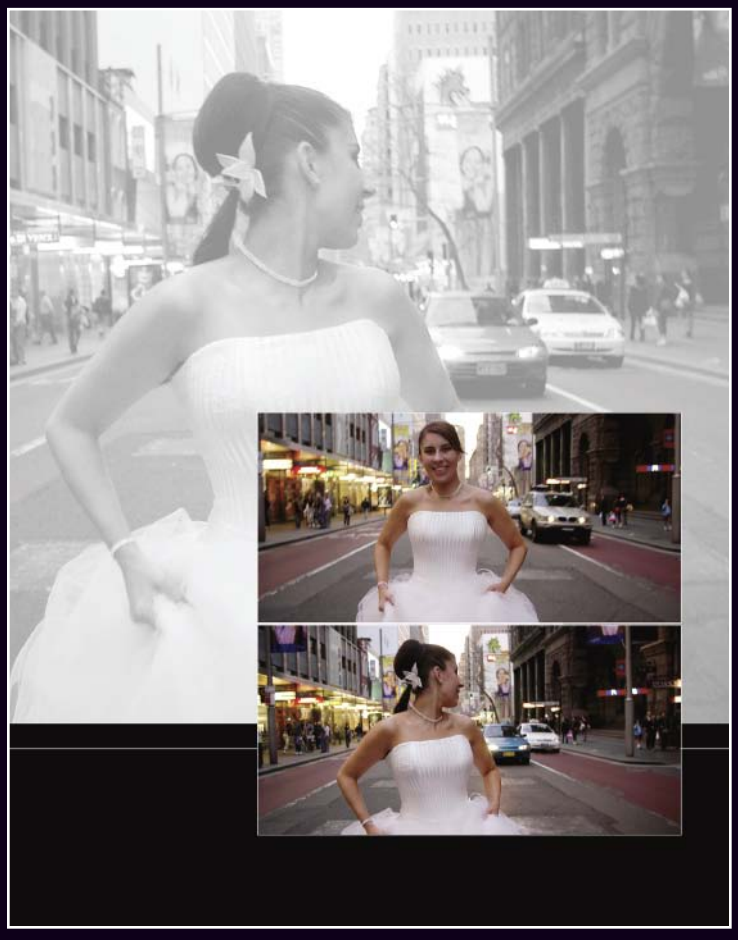
With light conversation, we discreetly screen the client by simply asking questions." Martin's questions include: how the client obtained his phone number, whether they have visited the web site, where the church and reception will be, and the amount of coverage they require. "Adding to this," says Martin, "we continue asking small things about their honeymoon, guest numbers, bridesmaids, etc. This gives us a fair assumption of the clients' wants and needs and we offer a rough estimate of our prices. Establishing that our prices are within their budget, a studio appointment is arranged."

Engagement Portraits

Engagement portraits are encouraged in Schembri's coverage and are usually included in their wedding packages at no extra charge. "However, only the sitting is free, not the prints. Our average sale for these sittings is about $600 to $750." The trick is to ensure that the sitting is conducted about a month after they have booked the wedding date. Then, Martin sells the couple on displaying prints from the engagement session at the reception, noting that his collage layouts are extremely popular.

Pricing

Schembri's pricing philosophy is based on the premise that the value of the image is not based on the size of the print, but the time and infrastructure that produced the



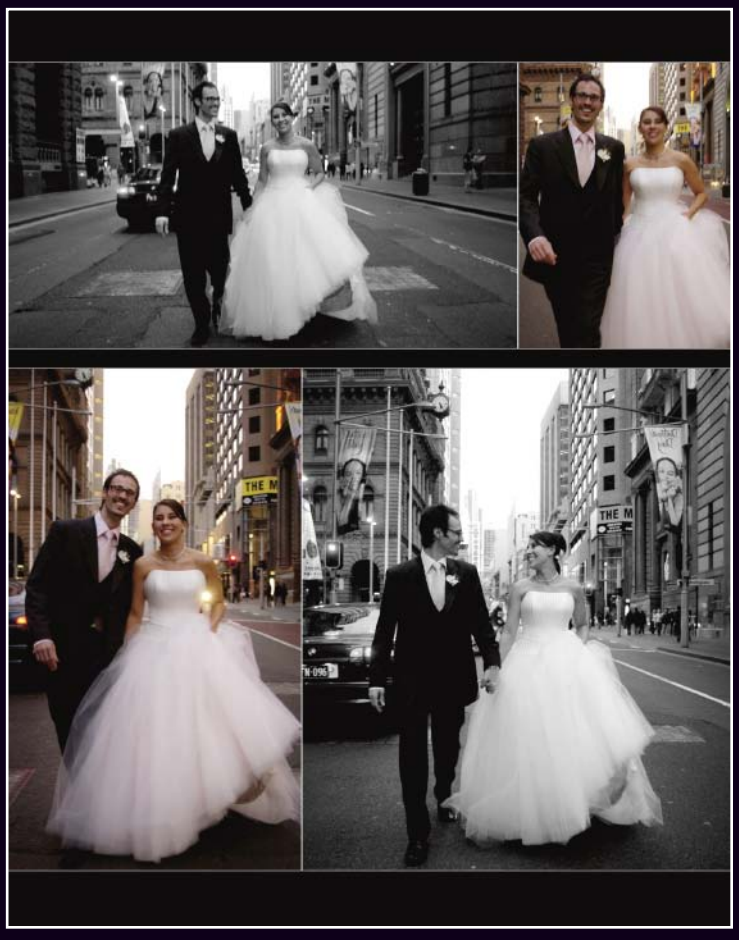


image. "I price my work accordingly and refuse to compromise my prices just to win over a job on the basis of price alone. My clients pay a minimum price per print, whether the image is the size of a postage stamp or an 8x10." His work is also priced to include full retouching, custom printing, and outstanding presentation.

The Wedding Day

Most of Martin's wedding coverage includes attending the groom's and bride's homes approximately one hour before they are due to leave for the services. Depending on the time the service is booked, he usually takes two to three hours to do location and formal photography after the ceremony. This is followed by reception coverage, which normally ends around midnight. If the bride and groom choose full reception coverage, they might opt for an add-on called "night shots." These are photographed under Harbor Bridge, including city and opera house backgrounds. If the weather is bad, these photos are made inside their hotel foyer and bedrooms. Another option for clients on a budget is to have Martin attend the first part of the reception and photograph a mock-up of the cake-cutting, toast, or other events. This normally takes about thirty minutes.

Workflow and Album Design

With full-on digital shooting, they capture approximately twelve hundred images and edit down to six- to eight-hundred. Martin uses iViewMedia Pro to sort, edit, and rename files, which are then proofed with no work done other than rotating for proper orientation. The images are presented to the clients using paper proofs from the Edge Lab in Melbourne, Australia, on A4 size paper with eight images per sheet, making each image about 2x3 inches. Clients receive this proof package after the album planning session.

"I normally allow approximately three to four hours for an album planning session," Martin says. "Before the client comes in, I preselect the best images and design the best album possible. We then show the proposed lay-

out as a slide show set to music. After tears are wiped away, we show the entire collection of all the images and invite them to change or delete any pages or images they wish. If they agree not to delete any of the pages I have designed, I offer incentives like free embossing or a carrying case." Martin firmly believes that this is more appreciated than a discount, yet helps the client to accept the extra charges beyond the original package.

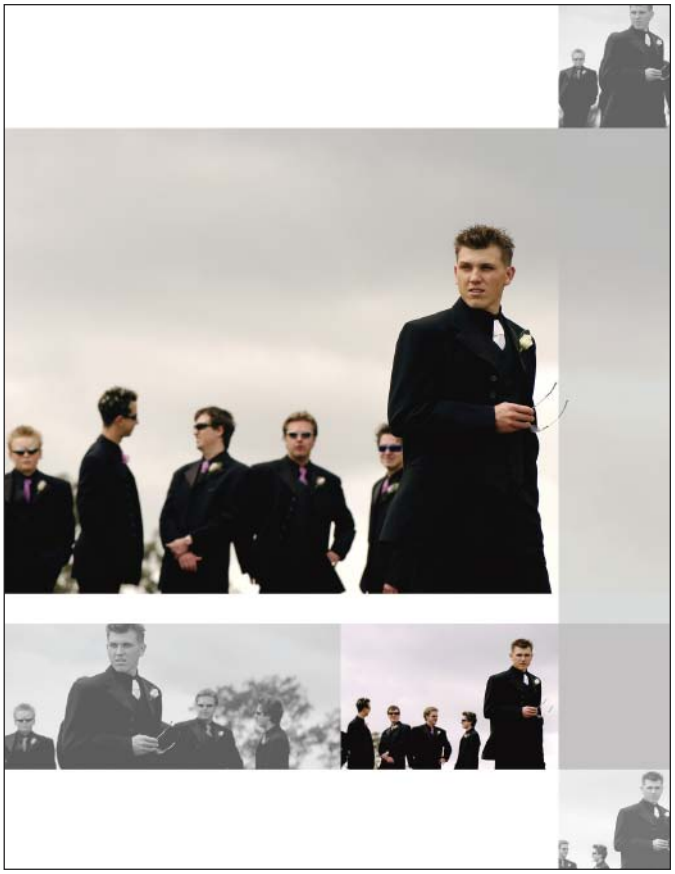
Schembri uses Seldex for producing their albums because of their good quality material and service. He also offers his clients a magazine-style album that includes fully mounted pages with digitally designed collages on every page. Other available design features are digital collages mixed into a traditional-style album, single or double-page panoramic enlargements fully mounted onto the album pages, and a double-spread reception collage of about thirty images. These features are available in parent albums as well.

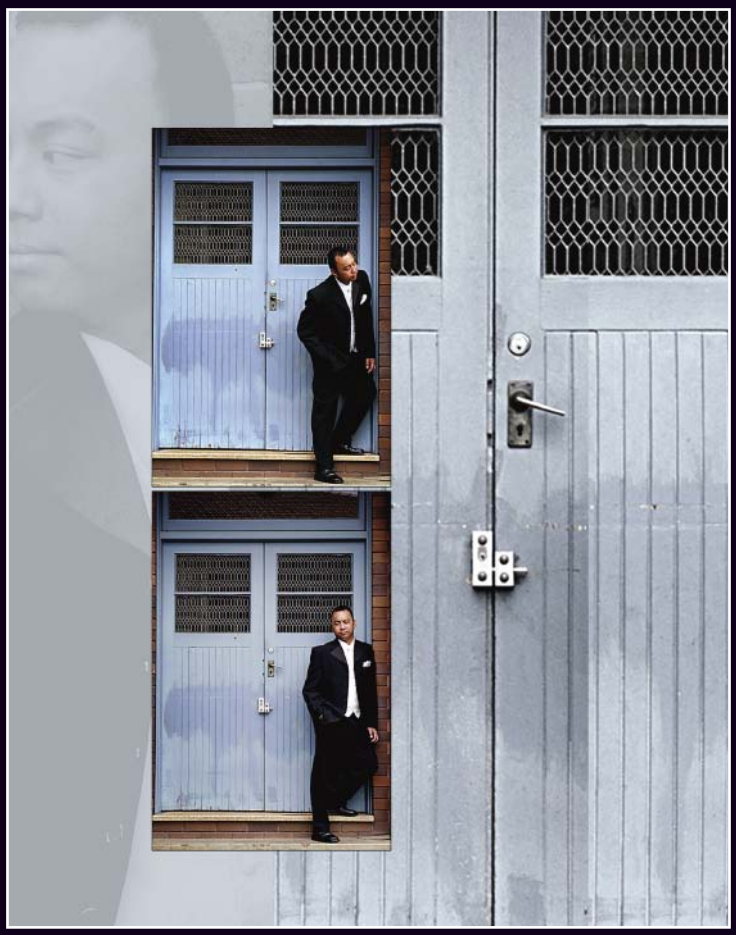
Martin's predesigned digital template program is also available for purchase by other photographers. Called YSI, for You Select It, it contains over 125 individual designs of collage layouts, which have proved to be extremely popular. Additional templates can be purchased in packs of 125 for lots of variety.

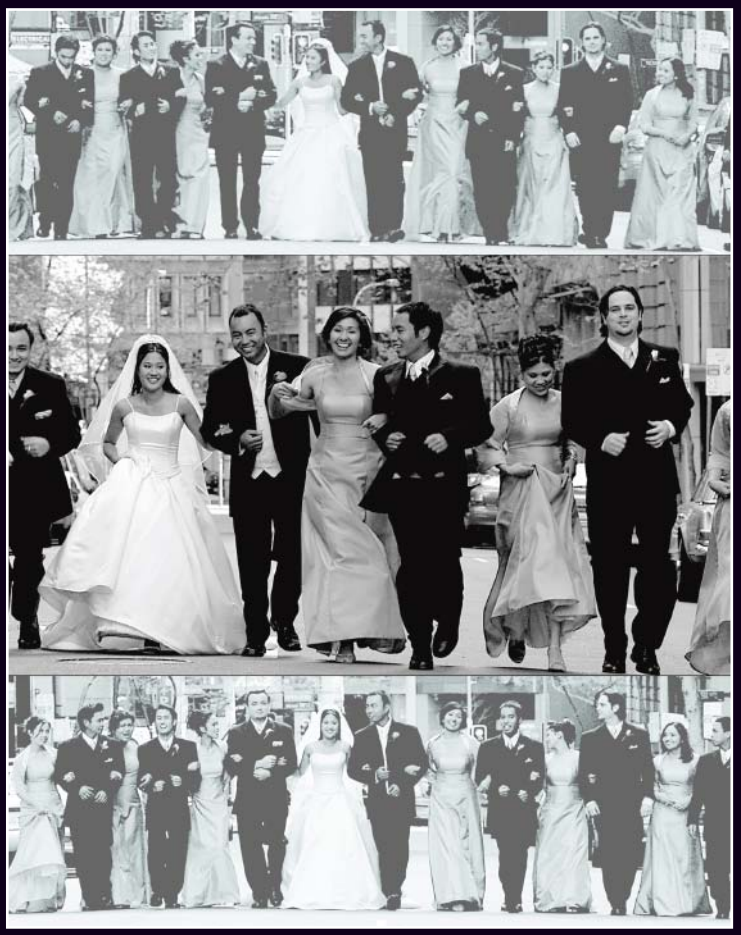
Album Sales

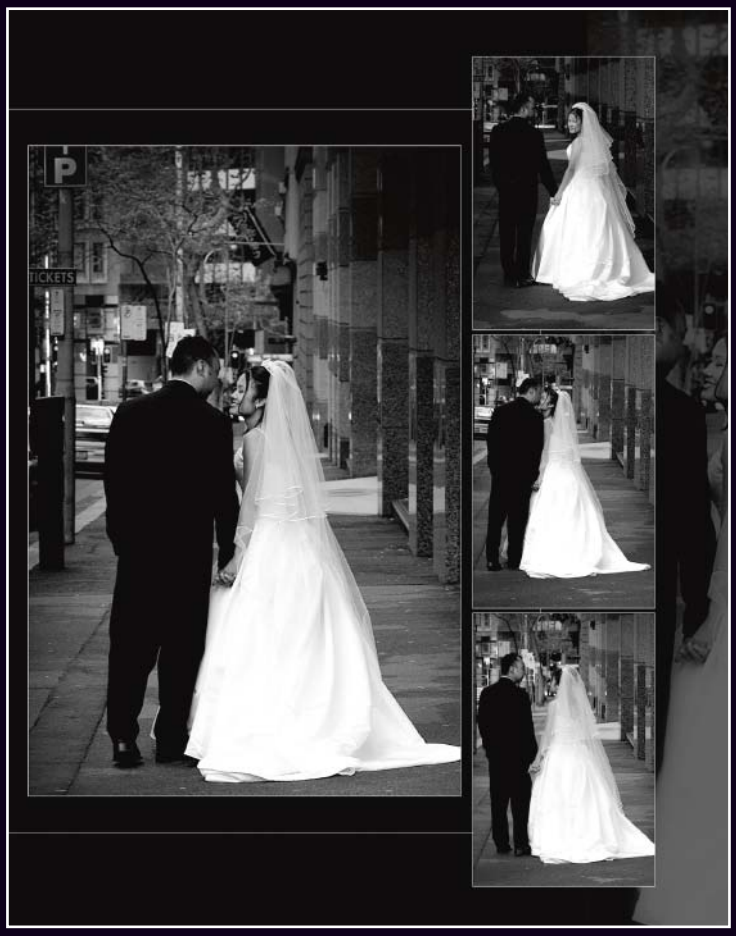
Schembri Photography's wedding coverage includes a pre-sold twenty-four-side album. When it comes time to design the album, however, a sixty- to ninety-side book is put together and presented to the couple. The idea is to tie the story together, as a total story sequence from beginning to end, so that it would be difficult for the couple to eliminate any spreads. "It's an excellent way to

The idea is to tie the story together, as a total story sequence from beginning to end.





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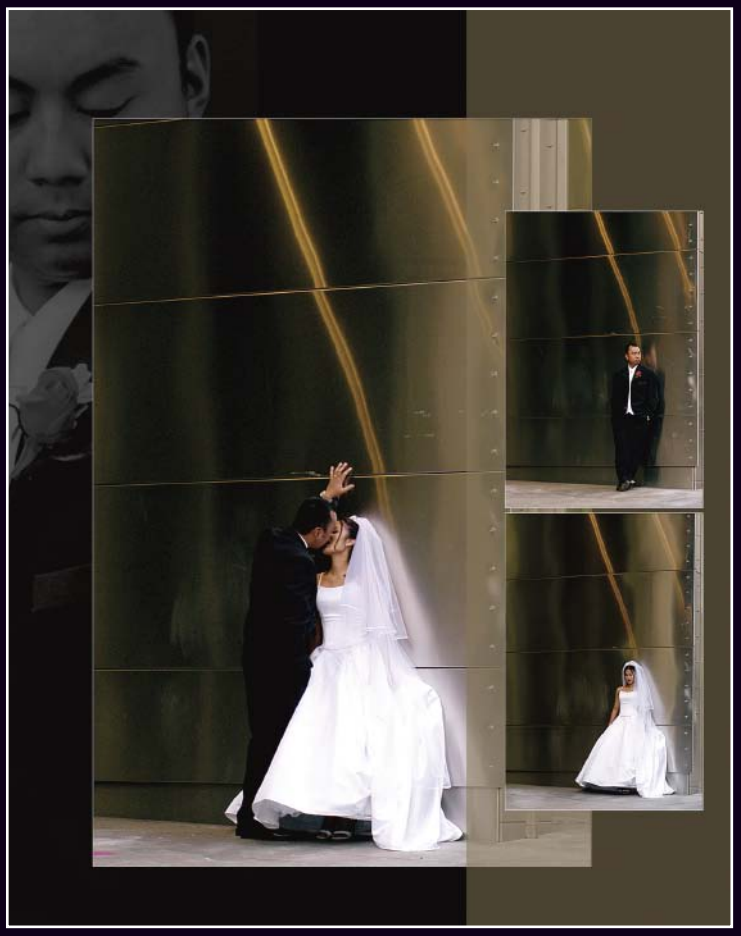
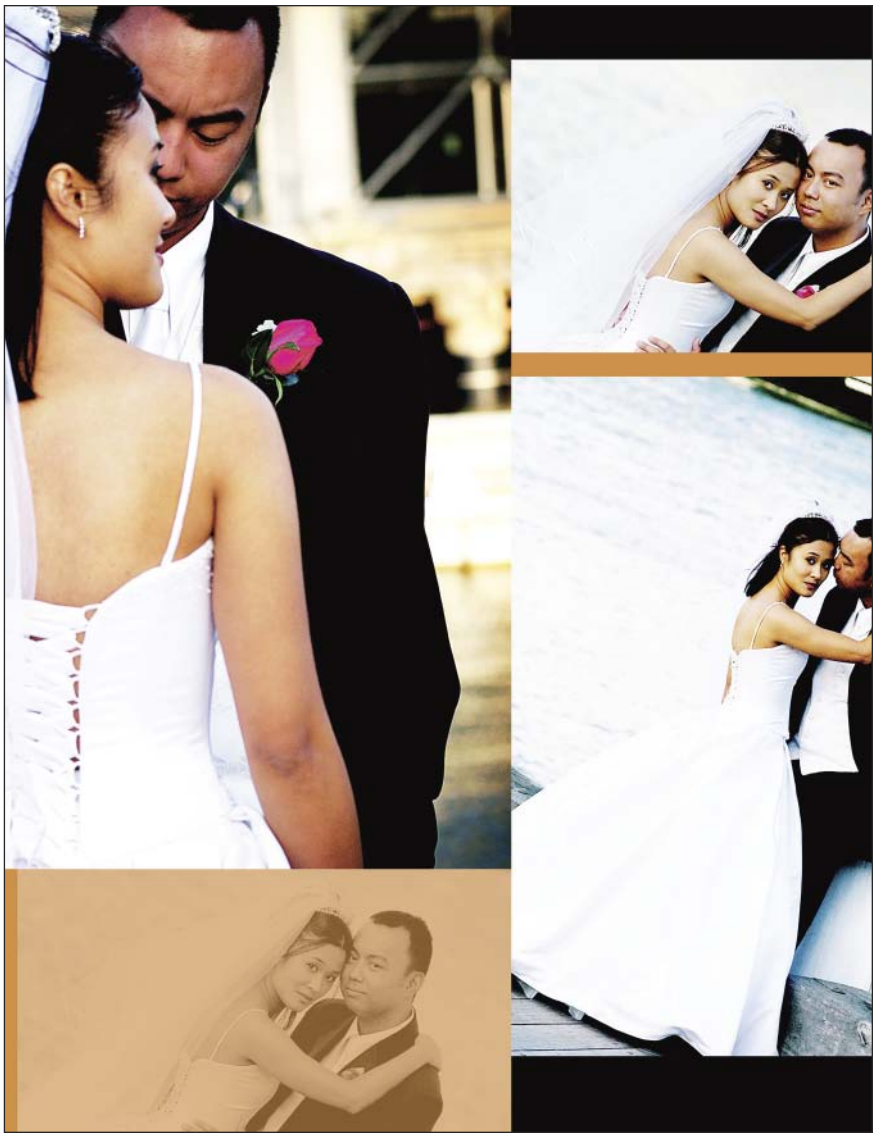


upsell your clients," says Martin. "Each additional side is $240, and clients have the option of pre-ordering album sides before the wedding at a discount."

In order to entice couples to upgrade their coverage he'll offer their parents "mini-mags" which are copies of the couple's album. The studio also offers an interesting add-on: a parent gift enlargement that is photographed during the afternoon of the wedding, then printed and framed within a couple of hours. Prearranged with a local lab, these are finished and presented to the parents at the reception. This usually adds an extra $600 to the package price.

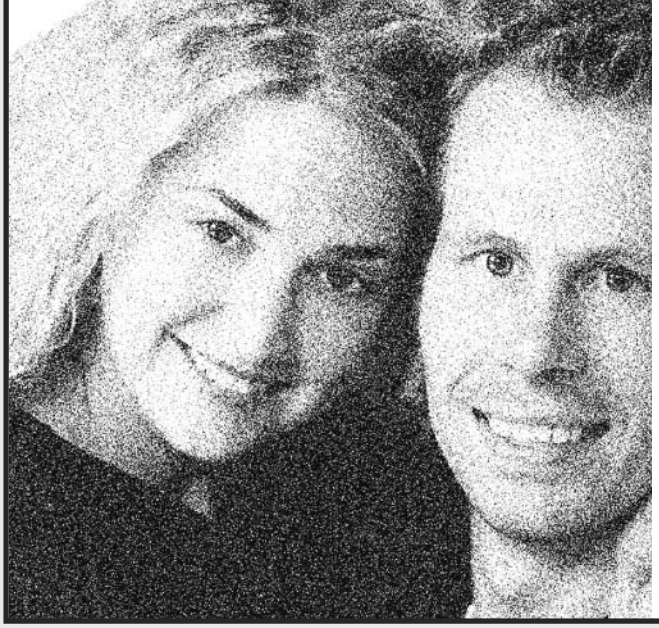


Final Thoughts

Schembri offers these words of wisdom: "Think long and hard about the hours, the weekend work, and the risks involved in shooting an event that cannot be repeated. Know your gear well and make sure it works. Carry backup gear. Have a good insurance policy. Crawl first, listen to your peers, and then walk slowly. Set your goals and keep on track. Introduce a shooting policy that suits you and your photography. Be prepared for many disappointments, but don't let these distract you from your vision. The rewards are there if you work hard enough for them.

"Persistence, patience, and desire to succeed are my creed. If you are not hungry enough, you won't achieve your dreams. Don't give up. Set a goal for what you want from your career in five years. It really doesn't matter what your goal is; it could be a trip around the world, a new car, whatever. Just set the goal and use it as an incentive to keep going. There will be many times when all you want to do is throw in the towel, but don't let a bad experience or an irate client bring you down. Remember, it happens to all of us.

"Join organizations. Go to as many seminars as possible, meet and get to know as many other photographers as possible; put your hand up to join or help out with any photographic occasions. You will be amazed at the amount of information and extra knowledge you will gain. Most photographers also run small studios and experience the same problems that you face. Sharing your frustrations will give you more inspiration to continue; you'll soon realize that most problems are trivial, and that there is always tomorrow to look forward to. Finally, don't lose the vision. Spend some time enjoying your craft and, when time allows, go out and do some photography for yourself—not to sell, but to inspire!"



CHAPTER TWELVE

Charles and Jennifer Maring

www.maringphoto.com

Charles and Jennifer Maring both had their first view of photography at a young age and started their careers from the printing side. "My first experience with photography and Photoshop was kind of all at once," Charles explains. "My brother, who is ten years older, was doing some fashion photography. Dad built him a darkroom, but my brother lost interest. Dad printed fine-art work as a hobby and loved the printing side, and I developed pictures with him. I always paid attention." Charles was then exposed to wedding photography when his parents started photographing weddings on a freelance basis. His parents did their own printing, both color and black & white, and Charles began assisting them. Later, Charles went to work outside the family business for a photo lab and photographer for a period of five years.

"We want every client to walk out feeling that they got the best thing we could create based on their day."

"My family lived very close to New York City," says Jennifer. "I was constantly in a city atmosphere, being exposed to visual art. My parents enjoyed photography as well, so photography was always around me." Starting in high school, Jennifer worked in a lab with a photographer, which added to her understanding of the technical side of photography. It turns out that this was the same lab Charles had worked in five years before.

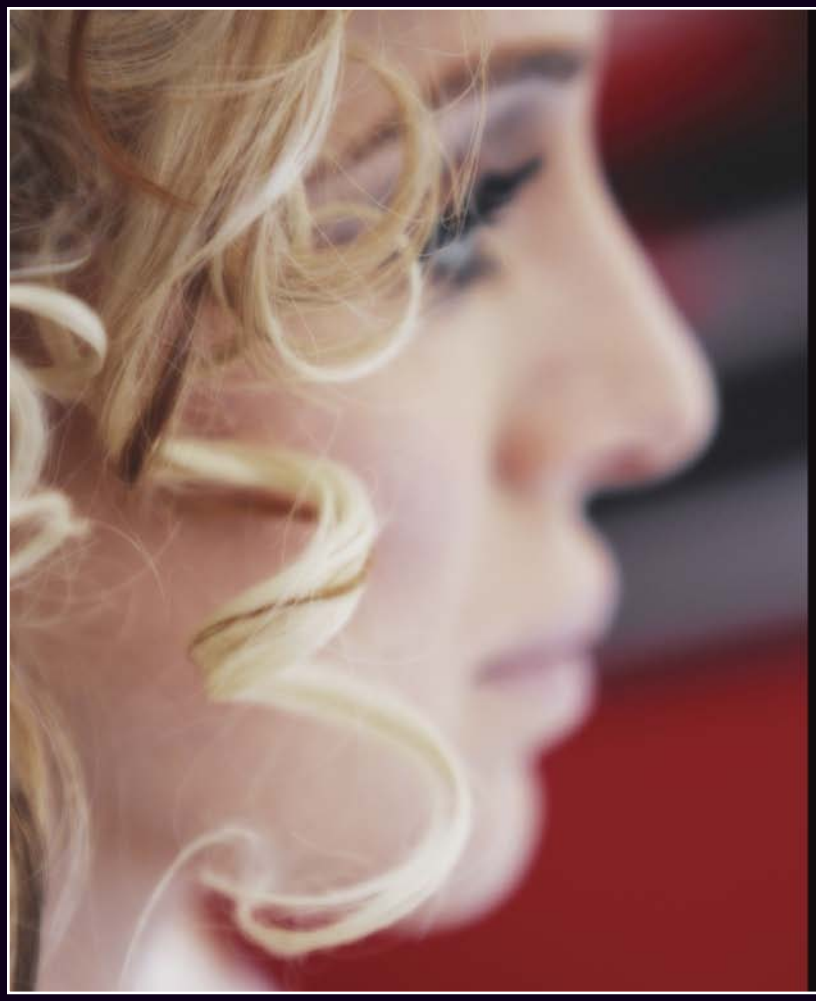
Years later, neither of these photographers is a stranger to awards. Their combined achievements include six Connecticut Photographer of the Year awards, three Kodak Gallery Awards, two Fuji Masterpieces, and the Grand Award from WPPI for their 2000 album. They also present programs at numerous conventions.

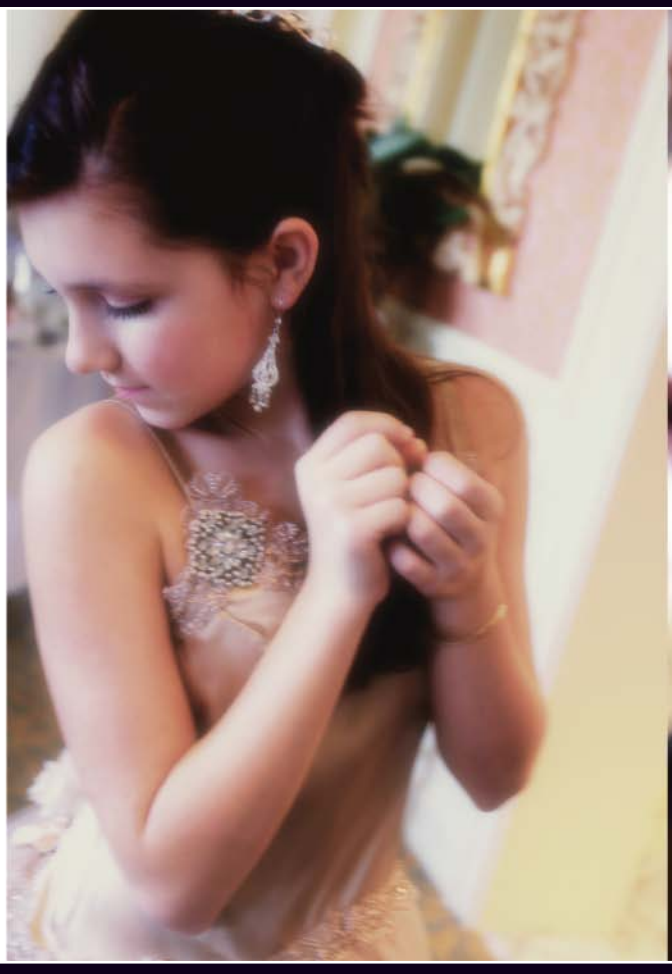
Excellence in Printing

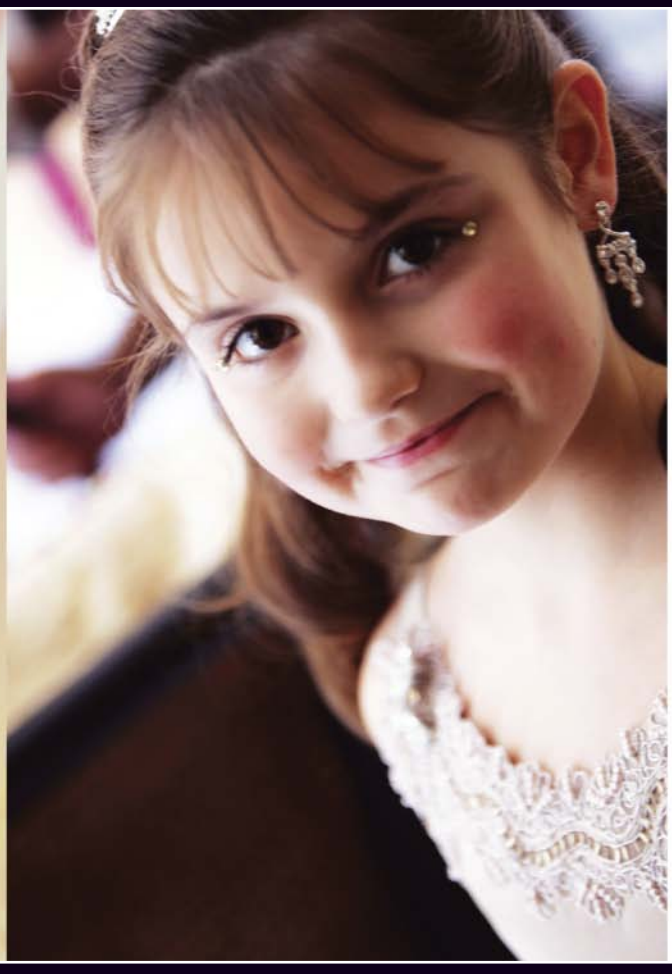
Charles and Jennifer capture all of their images digitally. "When brides call, they often ask if we shoot in black & white or in color. The way we answer that question is, 'You are going to see digitally mastered photography, not to be confused with just digitally capturing and printed work.'" Charles explains to their customers that an actual human being takes pride in the print quality. They believe the person *taking* the photograph supplies the canvas and oils, but the person *printing* the photograph is the actual painter. "We are really pushing the idea of not just the standard print, but a more refined quality where we are burning and dodging on every page of the album. We take pride in the details, and we are using our Photoshop knowledge to its full potential."

Consultation and Customer Service

"When we are talking on the phone to a bride our first question is, 'Have you seen our web site?' If they have, they already know that we're very creative, and they are







looking forward to coming into the gallery. The web site is the key to giving our clients a good first impression."

At the first meeting, the Marings greet their clients, let them walk around the gallery, view images, and make their own determination of quality. "Then we sit down with them," says Charles. "We listen to our couple. I believe there is a place in the world for photojournalism and portraiture, but everything is based on the clients' tastes. If they say they want photojournalism exclusively, we pull that out. If they are looking for a good blend of photojournalism and portraiture, we show that. We let them make the decision on how much 'nonfiction' photojournalism and what level of portraiture they want."

Jennifer continues, "We also have the 'wow' factor. From the moment they step through the door it smells nice and feels nice; it's comfortable, not stuffy. We are dealing with a lot of women, and I want the experience to be very positive."

Additionally, the Marings have begun using a lot of multimedia. "We give our couples a virtual wedding brochure," explains Jennifer. "It's a huge thing for us, because our work is hard to describe. The virtual brochure starts with a multimedia slide show of the refined images from a complete wedding story. We want to show consistency, not just sporadic images. From there, it's like navigating a web site. We show different collections, album styles, and page layouts so they can see the designer quality we produce. The presentation also includes pricing and credentials. It's built in Flash Five and burned to CD (and soon on DVD) so the whole family can gather around the television and see it."

"We are seeing more and more people who know how to reach the bride in very creative ways, so look forward. Don't just learn Photoshop—dive into web site design and multimedia presentations," she says. "We have actually found a new product in that. Brides now want a multimedia presentation of their own wedding, so we put their wedding album images creatively on a DVD, as a companion piece to their wedding albums."

Pricing

The Marings' pricing structure started as à la carte, but Charles wanted to eliminate those few couples who would come in after the wedding day and then realize they couldn't afford to walk away with something the Marings were proud to hand them. "We want every client to walk out feeling that they got the best thing we could create based on their day," he says.

Now, the Marings offer package-based pricing. "Most weddings last between six and fifteen hours. Our album collections start with a single volume for an eight-hour day with a hundred hand-printed and mounted photographs. The next collection shifts to ten hours, which includes a double volume. Twelve or more hours are needed for a triple volume."

With these packages, and up-front pricing for add-ons, the clients are in control. Smart couples plan ahead, but some do choose to start with the minimum. "Those who do wait are prepared to upgrade, because we have already spelled out how much they should expect to spend when the event is complete," he adds. "You never want to shock people with the price afterwards. Putting everything on the table before the event makes sure there are no misunderstandings at a later date."

Albums are priced with simple math so that it is easily understood by everyone. The cost for covers and binding is $1,000. For their largest books (10x14-, 10x15-, or 11x14-inches, depending on the product) the cost is $100 per side. The client can have up to two images per page on average throughout the book. This keeps the focus on the photography rather than the design. "Most couples create double volumes with elegant matching leather slip cases and often order replicas for their parents as well," says Jennifer. The slip cases add to the elegance of the books. They have even had couples decide to purchase four- or five-volume sets for a full weekend of wedding coverage.

"Putting everything on the table before the event makes sure there are no misunderstandings at a later date."

"Clients have the ability to choose coverage time and albums. I'm not trying to upsell them an album afterward," says Charles. "Our clients pay a lot of money for other vendors. I want them to feel that my product is on par with everything else that they have purchased, including beautiful gowns, flowers, and dinner."

The Marings always custom quote their suggested album(s) before the event. "Based on nearly two decades experience, we pretty much know what it takes to tell a story best related to the size of the event, number hours, locations, or days spent capturing images," says Charles. "Usually around 15 percent of the images should make the album."

Additional Products

The Marings feel that parents should receive gift albums. As such, they offer a 60-percent discount on parent replicas, which are usually one size smaller than the bride and groom's personal book(s). The Marings' favorite wedding album story actually relates to parent albums. Says Jennifer, "We had a mom call and leave a voice mail one day that she had a problem with the album. She had created a book with a silver metal cover. Turns out her problem was she loved it so much she wanted another copy with a copper cover to match their furniture at their second home in Boca Raton. I called John Garner Bookcrafts, and he said 'No problem.' You have to love it when clients love your work that much!"

Small gold stands hold the matted images in the center of the table and guests can then sign the mat.

The Marings also create guest books from the engagement sessions, but find that most couples prefer large canvases, rather than albums, from their engagement sessions. They also sell several image boxes per year. These

contain a different matted image for each table at the reception. Small gold stands hold the matted images in the center of the table and guests can then sign the mat. At the end of the night, they collect the images and the couple goes home with a personalized guest image box. "It adds to the charm of the event," says Jennifer, "and it always sparks conversations at the tables when everyone notices that each image at each table is different."

Workflow

Charles and Jennifer capture unlimited photographs at each event, but the total is usually between fifteen hundred and four thousand, depending on the size of the event. "We capture in RAW, download the files, then utilize iViewMedia Pro to organize and narrow the selection to around a thousand to fifteen-hundred images. Photographic C prints are printed as nine-up 8.5x11-inch contact sheets and bound into a book-style presentation," says Charles.

"The best 150 to 200 images are brought into Aperture to be processed individually, making sure the color and contrast is optimized. Then, these images are stylized in Photoshop to specific themes that we discuss with the client to coincide with their wedding style and story. These images are then printed four-up on a page for a larger image. These become what we call the Artists Designer Photographs or 'ADPs'," explains Charles. "They become a guide for the couple. The ADP images are also posted online for friends and family."

"How much work is done depends on the clients' taste. If they want clean, crisp images it's much easier than if we are creating vintage looks," says Charles. "Generally, however, a full day of work goes into the postproduction and design of the ADPs. It makes us proud to present our very best work to the couple."

The couple's contact books are presented in two to three weeks, and the Maring's find that brides like this system better than proofs. "Who wants to carry around a thousand photographs in a bunch of bulky proof albums or images in a box? And we don't just print the proofs, we also pre-design the album," continues Charles. "We do all the album design work up front. That may sound crazy, but we've learned if we go over their original album size, they usually add what we have suggested."

"We find couples are giving us complete creative freedom. They look at the color proof images and then at the refined ones, and they realize they don't think like that," says Charles. "They leave it up to me to determine what is in the best interest of each photograph and the story."

Album Design

The Maring's use Apple's Aperture to have a personal meeting with the client to pick out and choose images for the album. "This is a fantastic tool for sharing the detail of the images—and with dual-monitor support on Apple's 30-inch monitors, it creates an amazing presentation. We can show several images at a time and help clients understand how images relate to one another," says Charles.

"The client ultimately chooses the images for the album," says Charles. "Most couples choose 85 percent of the ADPs, then add some from the extras based on vanity and their personal who's who list." The Maring's albums are designed by Melissa Bell, who is part of ResolutionLab.com, a company that designs and ships prints to any album company that you choose.

"Our couples deserve one-of-a-kind presentations rather than production books."

Album Production

Jennifer says, "John Garner BookCrafts is our binder for most everything. He is the most detailed and easy-to-get-along-with bookmaker we have worked with, and he will create any custom idea we come up with. We can mix leather colors, put images on the covers in unique ways, and so many more ideas. There are no pre-designed sizes. John's albums are all custom. Also, we can leave it up to him whether a page should be cut in the middle or folded. I love this, because we can do digital albums that offer a choice based on what is right for the image." The Marings also use Zookbinder's Zookbook, because their slip cases are so amazing, and albums from GNP (Gross National Product).

Final Thoughts

Final words from Charles and Jennifer, "The design and creation of wedding albums is an art in itself. Our couples deserve one-of-a-kind presentations rather than production books. Album design should be very simplistic. The goal is to showcase masterpiece photographs and too much design draws away from the emotional impact of the images. I learned a lesson a long time ago, and I'll give the credit to Gary Fong. I took a week-long course with him and he showed triple-volume albums. I went home and created a triple—and the next week we sold one. Think outside the box of what your competitors show and sell. Couples like one-of-a-kind presentations and albums. You have to show multiple volumes to sell them. Clients love that they are elegantly presented in matching slip cases. They become prized possessions rather than just a wedding album."

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Brian and Judith Shindle

www.creativemoments.net

Brian and Judith Shindle enjoy a sterling reputation that has been earned over the last twenty-two years spent operating Creative Moments, a business located in the charming town of Westerville, OH. In addition to their exclusive family and children's portraiture, the Shindles specialize in unique wedding services including professional photography, bridal consulting, and custom invitations. Their one-of-a-kind offerings feature a comprehensive approach and exceptional personalized attention. This allows the studio to generate extraordinary revenue while focusing on fewer (but more significant) wedding and destination events.

Brian began photographing at fifteen but decided on a major in criminal justice upon entering college (when his parents urged him to "Get a real job!"). A few years and many photographic images later, he changed his coursework to reflect the original direction of his early life, concentrating on studies in the arts and photography at Ohio State University. After college, Brian continued his studies with instructors and mentors from across the globe. Today, he has earned the prestigious Master of Photography and Photographic Craftsman degrees from PPA while receiving the Accolade of Photographic Mastery, Accolade of Outstanding Photographic Achievement and Accolade of Exceptional Photographic Achievement from WPPI. Brian has also judged and spoken multiple times at WPPI and credits its powerful influence in his life today. He has photographed weddings for the chairman of the board of Wendy's, the founders of Red Roof Inns, the owners of Donato's Pizza, a CBS News anchor, screen celebrities, lawyers, doctors, and business owners from coast to coast.

Judith became involved with weddings before becoming involved in photography. By sixteen, she was modeling gowns in her hometown bridal salon, plus singing and playing the piano for weddings and special events. After studying music in college, Judith became Director of Charm and Etiquette Schools for a major retailer, co-founded a successful multi-state development/construction company and, eventually, bought a real estate firm, which she continues to own today. Upon meeting (and marrying) Brian, Judith began her photography education earning her Photographic Craftsman degree from PPA. Realizing the possibilities of being a wedding planner extraordinaire, she successfully completed extensive training and testing to become one of only thirty-two Master Bridal Consultants™ with the Association of Bridal Consultants. Judith maintains a presence in the wedding industry by being frequently quoted in major bridal publications as well as authoring her own articles. Judith is a four-time ANNE marketing award winner

"Couples know how the personalized album design process is going to work from the initial interview."

from PPA, a PPA and WPPI member and platform speaker, and an ASP member. She has been featured in numerous magazine and television interviews.

Getting Started

The Shindles almost decided not to open Creative Moments. Brian had apprenticed in a high-volume studio

The couple worked at simply finding needs not being met for a consumer demographic group and filling them.

that contracted with almost every school in his hometown and participated in photographing three thousand seniors annually. His job became, according to Brian, "mechanical . . . like factory-work." He finally left his "day job" of photography altogether. When Judith heard of this freelance photographer on the market, she actually hired Brian as her *third* real estate photographer, as the earlier two weren't interpreting the client's wishes properly. Judith expressed her corporate need of exceptional images, recalling that, "Brian brought in the least amount of equipment, but he produced incredible visual results—and the rest is history. I recognized Brian was extremely gifted." With Brian's artistic talents and Judith's business abilities, marketing skills, and management expertise, they had the necessary ingredients to build the dream they share today. The two married and became business partners as well.

"We started the business with very little equipment, which was stolen from our car within our first month in business. Thank goodness for my parents, who loaned us some money. We added lots of prayer and raw talent. It was very humbling," says Judith.

"We persevered with our idea to just 'be different' than anyone else out there, and not to begin by giving it away, as many new studios do." The couple worked at simply finding needs not being met for a consumer demographic group and filling them—with profit built-in so they could *stay* in business.

Location and First Impressions

They initially chose a small, but upscale location above a framing shop and later designed a complete custom build-out for the interior of a warehouse. Uniquely flower-bedazzled on the exterior, Creative Moments today features an interior of imported antiques and European furnishings with stunning chandeliers. Clients are treated to fresh flowers, music, and chocolates, along with sodas, Perrier, Pellegrino, and spring water served in crystal goblets. Every possible need is provided in sparkling clean, well-furnished powder and dressing rooms. Long-stemmed roses are the finishing touch as the client prepares to leave. Judith maintains, "Creative Moments has become an oasis for our clients. A place to lock out the rest of the world and to dream of what they always wanted and dared not hope for—for fear they couldn't have it." The Shindles continue to prove it's possible by listening, with discernment and understanding, to the needs of their clients' hearts.

Marketing

As expert wedding designers, Brian and Judith have built a menu of offerings for their "client of choice," professionally established brides and grooms. All of their marketing materials—including all words, fonts, graphics, and images—are targeted for this specific market and designed to produce maximum revenue and enjoyment. Judith states, "Life is short, so why work with anyone who could make life brutal?" Accordingly, the Shindles do not participate in bridal shows (except for by-invitation-only events). Nor do they presently advertise. According to Judith, "In today's market, word of mouth and personal associations within the community, as well as partnering with vendors, leads us to our perfect client."

Customer Service

While many studio owners delegate reception duties, Judith answers all phone and e-mail inquiries herself, because she feels strongly that whoever speaks with a potential client first is the lifeblood of the business. "The initial contact can be do or die to your business," she says.

Clients are carefully screened in a conversational manner, usually without their knowledge. If they measure up, an invitation is extended to tour the gallery, meet with Brian and Judith personally, and view images. Judith adds, "I'm looking for lifetime clients every time I see someone or pick up the phone."

At the initial client meeting, Judith first presents "The Artist's Work" as well as additional services within their "Investment Menu." (Note the language she uses, designed to communicate the exclusivity of their business.)

She then introduces Brian, with whom the potential client is eager to share their vision and find a solid rapport. "During this process," Brian says, "We listen carefully to the wants and needs of the couple and provide different options on how they can be photographed, since every event is unique. We begin to formulate a plan on where, when, and how the images will be captured with our unobtrusive approach." Also outlined are additional services including options for professional bridal consulting and wedding planning.

Professional services are then designed for that client and a multipage agreement is sealed with a minimum deposit toward a custom-designed album and images. The balance is paid ninety days prior to the wedding.

Pricing

Creative Moments' pricing philosophy does not include packages. Instead, the couple selects the individual products and services that best suit their needs and budget. From the outset, something in the mid-four-figure range is suggested, and most clients plan on a larger five-figure investment.

Gift Certificates

With the wedding day reserved, the couple is officially registered at Creative Moments. Friends and family are then able to purchase beautiful linen gift certificates, presented in the Studio's signature wrap, that can be applied to future image and album investments. Says Judith, "Couples know how the personalized album design process is going to work from the initial interview. It is also explained in the agreement they sign. We have many brides and grooms who plan more than one album, and these investments can be credited with these wonderful wedding or shower gifts from their loved ones."

Service (and Sales) Opportunities

A Love Safari is included with each wedding and is scheduled whenever the bride and groom wish, and wherever they would like. Travel is additional, but that doesn't stop

today's couples. The location might be the parents' summer home where they were engaged, a winter hideaway full of memories, a local garden or historical venue, or the incredible possibilities available within the Shindle's studio. Coverage of engagement dinners, bridal luncheons, groomsmen's golf outings, rehearsals, rehearsal dinners, and a bridal image session prior to the wedding day offers additional service (and sales) possibilities.

Brian recalls a recent bride and her mother who flew to Creative Moments from Texas specifically for him to create two large studio wall portraits for display at the upcoming wedding back in Texas. When Brian and Judith flew to Houston to photograph the couple's Love Safari, days before their wedding, the portraits had been framed and shipped—ready for the wedding. Every bride and groom have needs that are unique to them, and the Shindles pride themselves in discovering the dreams that matter most to their clients.

The Wedding

Brian's wedding photography style is blended and includes the best of classic elements, documentary, and fashion looks. Every wedding varies, but generally he captures four- to eight-hundred images and may edit out 4 to 8 percent of them. He was trained to have purpose in every capture and continues with that philosophy. According to Judith, Brian has an uncanny ability to see moments before they begin to happen and is always looking to inconspicuously follow those movements.

A Love Safari is included with each wedding and is scheduled whenever the bride and groom wish, and wherever they would like.

Multiple locations are usually a part of the day, due to common restrictions by churches as to building use. Therefore, the framework of the day is discussed with the client months before their event and printed in a detailed itinerary for use by the wedding party and families. Low-stress and low-pressure is what clients expect from Creative Moments—and the Shindles perform their unique wedding day choreography with style, grace and

careful planning. Dressed for the occasion, Judith and Brian choose not to be noticed, allowing their choice of lenses, equipment, and discernment to capture their visual impressions.

Workflow

Brian captures his images in RAW format and then prepares images to be shown in a "Media Premiere" at an agreed-upon time after their honeymoon. Since there is no time restriction on viewing the images, many couples wait several weeks and/or months until they are settled in

Guests are served chilled beverages and find a sumptuous catered buffet of hors d'oeuvres . . .

to plan their special invitation-only party for up to eight additional guests at the studio. In some cases, couples are flying in from around the globe, as are family.

Upon arrival, all are warmly greeted and ushered into an intimate media room with comfortable seating. Guests are served chilled beverages and find a sumptuous catered buffet of hors d'oeuvres, fruit, crudités, and delectable chocolates displayed on distinctive silver trays. When their crystal plates are filled, everyone relaxes in a cozy homelike fashion. Lights are dimmed, music swells, and everyone is transported via incredible wall-size images to a day and time forever to be remembered. Tissues are provided, laughter is abundant, and couples are arm in arm. It's not unusual to hear "Oohs" and "Aahs" and an ovation at the end. Most of the time, no one wants the lights to come up again. This is a perfect opportunity to remind everyone of the memories they'll be able to take with them throughout life in the beautiful images to be found in the wedding album that is yet to be designed for them. (And should friends or family of the bride and groom choose to place orders after the Media Premiere, they can make an appointment to view the wall-size images in the gallery.)

The guests are also reminded that many clients choose to invest in more than one album. As a result, it's not unusual to plan several albums at once—and the Shindles offer their professional design assistance on each, handwriting the orders. These orders must be paid in full at the time they are placed.

The most important clients, of course, remain the bride and groom, and it is to them that Creative Moments looks for maximum revenue return. From the start,

couples always plan to add thousands to their minimum deposit in preparation for their professionally designed Love Safari and wedding albums.

When finished albums arrive, the boxes are adorned with gorgeous ribbons and wrapped in the Shindles' own signature gift wrap. Creative Moments continues in its "Clients for Life" concept by offering each couple complimentary portrait sessions throughout their marriage. Brian and Judith are also sure to remember them with occasional notes, holiday cards, emails, and phone calls—just to let them know they're thinking about them.

Album Production

The Shindles have carefully researched the albums they've represented through the years and are pleased to offer custom bound flush or reversible albums from Leather Craftsmen, as well as coffee-table albums by Luxury Bound. These proven companies stand behind their products with optimum durability and longevity.

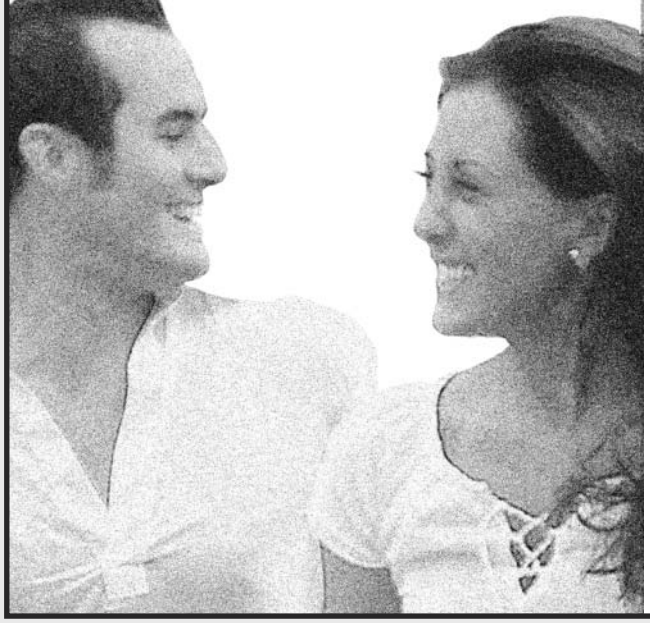
Image Archives

Previous orders, files and archives are available from the last twenty-eight years of Brian's weddings and are kept in climate-controlled warehouse space. Judith recalls a vividly a frantic bride's early-morning phone call after a sleepless night. "The couples' basement had flooded in the home they had just moved into and she wanted to assure herself we could reprint her entire album if it was found in the bottom of a submerged box. The groom remembered we archived all images and told his wife to roll over and go back to sleep—which made her even more furious! The groom was right, of course. The bride was reassured and, most importantly, they found their album unscathed after all their boxes were unpacked! Even after the fact, however, she was thrilled that her decision to have Creative Moments photograph their wedding meant additional calm years—especially in case of loss."

"Your branding keeps bringing them back for more—it's you!"

Final Thoughts

Creative Moments is truly an "experience" not to be missed. The Shindles have a style all their own; they are always changing with the times to enjoy the latest technology, but always making sure it fits their business model and marketing demographic, as well. Brian states, "The best images, the latest equipment, the newest technology can never replace that personal flavor that sets you apart from all the rest. Find your style and go with it. Your branding keeps bringing them back for more—it's you!"



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

JB and DeEtte Sallee

www.salleephotography.com

Both JB and DeEtte Sallee studied photography in college at Southwest Texas University (now named Texas State). They did not expect to make a career in the field, but after doing a few jobs here and there, their business, Sallee Photography, came about.

The Sallees are no strangers to winning awards for their photography, garnering titles like Dallas Photographer of the Year two years in a row, first place awards in various WPPI wedding categories, along with string of other awards that include PPA's Diamond Award and Kodak Gallery Awards.

Sales and Pricing

At one time the Sallees used to include a CD slide show in their wedding packages. Now, however, they hand over a CD of color-corrected, mid-resolution files—and that is pretty much all the clients receive with their basic package. Albums and any extras are additional.

"Our latest sales idea for albums is to not include them in our wedding packages," shares DeEtte. "We were finding we were making these amazing albums for people who were just getting it because it was in the package and not really caring about it. Now the only couples that are purchasing albums are ones who truly care about our work and let us be as creative as possible."

The Sallees' wedding albums begin at $3,000 for a twenty-page, 10x10-inch album. This pricing is only available, however, with a commitment before the wedding; albums are more expensive for the couple to purchase after the wedding. "We like to know going into a wedding if they are getting an album or not," says JB. "We also want to close the couples out soon after the wedding and not have their jobs pending for years following the event."

The Sallees price their albums per side with a minimum of twenty sides. As the album's physical size increases, so does the cost per page. They also try to upsell album pages after the wedding by creating four to ten extra pages in their design. This expanded album is presented in a slide-show format at their gallery for the couple to approve. Then the option of upgrading or cutting out pages is presented. Most people realize their album does need most, if not all, of the extra pages to help complete their wedding story.

Templates help balance the need for design and speed as they re-create their favorite award-winning spreads.

The Wedding Day

When asked what special techniques thay have for capturing images, JB replies, "We do not think there are really any special techniques for capturing images of people. You just have to be a nice, normal person in order to

bring out their personality in front of the camera. Once you get them comfortable with you and the camera, that's when the true magic happens."

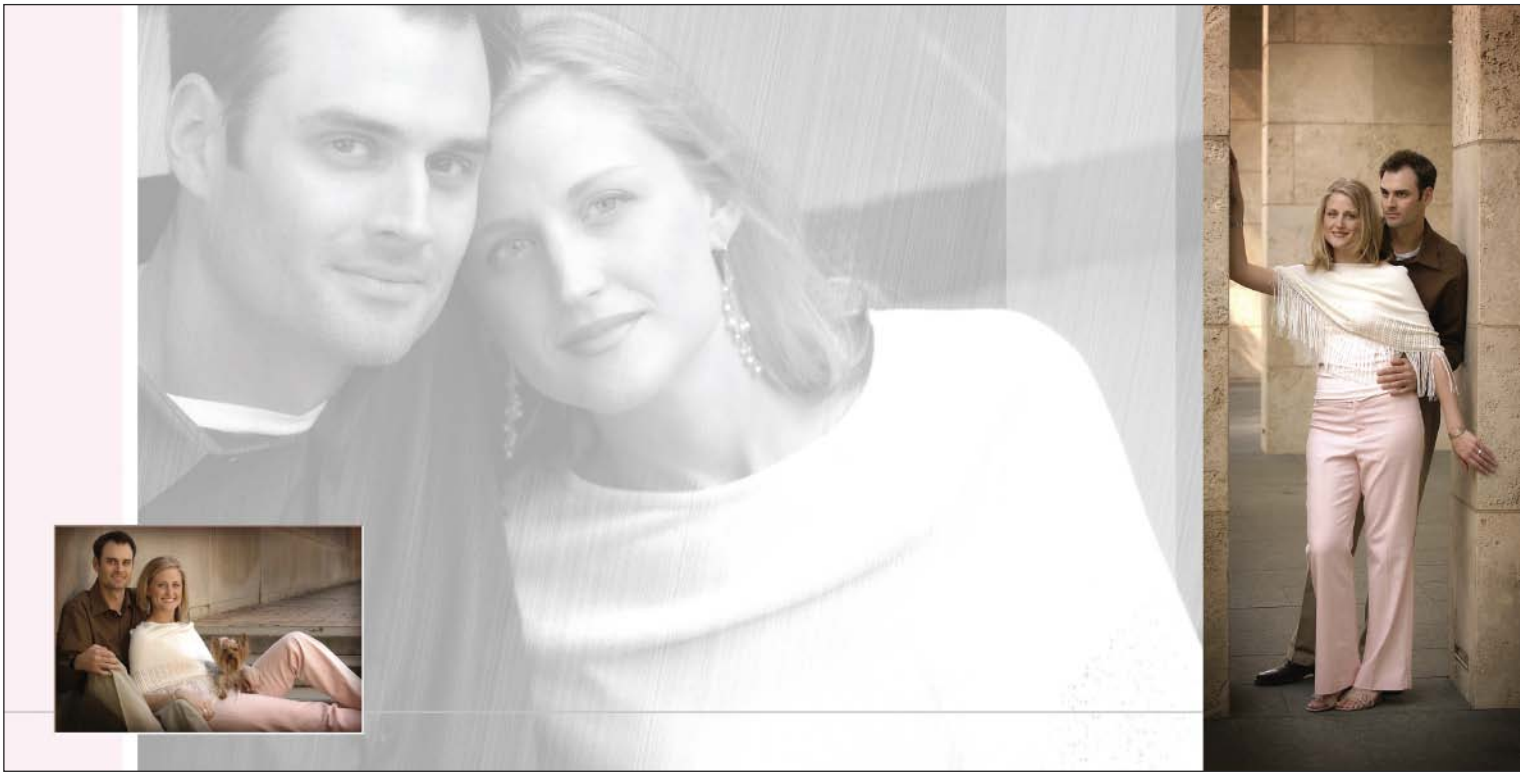
Workflow

Digital workflow for the Sallees starts with shooting RAW files. Images are uploaded and there is a light edit before renumbering. At this point they burn DVDs for their first backup.

Then it's time to bring out the knife and cut into the images for a heavy edit, taking the twelve hundred images captured down to eight hundred. Images are then renumbered to keep them in time sequence. This is followed by color correction using Canon's digital photo professional software.

Next they create a second backup to DVD, this time with the correctly numbered images. The next edit takes the count down to 75 to 150 images that the Sallees would like to be considered for the album design. These are copied to a new folder with the client's name. JB reviews the images and begins to mentally map out the design of the album, then the design occurs.

In addition to the first color adjustment, a few additional batch actions are applied to make the images pop a little more. All of the images are presented in color without retouching, as the clients (who have already re-



ceived prints from the bridal and engagement sessions) already know exactly what the Sallees finished prints will look like.

Album Design

"We always select the images that go into our albums," states JB. "We feel that as artists we should be trusted to do this. We tell our clients that this is what they are paying us to do: be the artists!"

JB and DeEtte used to design every album from scratch in Photoshop—and they are still doing that for their competition albums. For client albums, however, they recently developed their own album templates to save time. Templates help balance the need for design and speed as they re-create their couple's favorite award-winning spreads from albums over the years. "We also just released automated versions of our templates that will build the spread for you—just hit a few buttons. They are truly amazing and the response from other photographers has been great," reports JB.

"We always bring the couple over to preview the final design on a large monitor before it's sent off to be printed and bound," says DeEtte. "We never e-mail the design to the couple because this is where you will see a crazy

number of silly changes from them. They have too much time to ponder over it."

The Sallees favorite wedding album story is a good example of just that. It involves a couple that prided themselves on being "artistic." There was great coverage at the couple's wedding and the Sallees captured some amazing images of the event. After the wedding, JB and DeEtte choose the images and made an incredible design for them. The couple was too busy to come over, so the Sallees made the mistake (never to be repeated) of e-mailing the perfect design to the couple thinking the "artists" would just love it.

The bride and groom came back with a list of changes a mile long, wanting random snapshots of people from the wedding added to spreads that were taken at different times of the day. They were basically trying to make sure that everyone they knew "made the album" instead of making the story about themselves and the important people involved.

"We made the changes for them after much discussion," laments JB, "but kept our original design for ourselves and entered it in our regional five-state competition where it received a perfect 100 score. It later won other awards at other competitions, too. The couple truly had a 'perfect' album that they butchered. No hard feelings, though; now we show the perfect design to our potential clients in our studio!" The Sallees suggest, "Be strong. Do not let the clients dictate your album design and charge a good price for your albums. Creating them is a lot of work, so charge accordingly."

Album Production

The Sallees are using Kambara USA for their album production. Kambara ships all of their albums directly to the studio in very elegant black magnetic-flap boxes. JB and DeEtte just add their company logo sticker to the front and the album is ready to go.

DeEtte says, "They are such a great company to work with. The team there is in tune with photographers' needs. We switched to them after attending a PPA trade show, because we wanted to do a unique size album (17x8 inches) of an urban bridal session. We went to every album company booth and asked if they would create this size for us. All instantly said no to us, except Kambara. They were excited to step outside the box. We now use them for any unique size we can imagine as well as our more traditional sizes. They offer great covers, fast turn around, and are simply easy and great to deal with!" (*Note:* That 17x8-inch album took third place in PPA's portrait album category in 2006.)

"Charge a good price for your albums. Creating them is a lot of work, so charge accordingly."

The Sallees only offer flush-mount albums. This is their specialty and fits their photography style. "We believe in not having too many options for potential clients," says DeEtte. "They just get confused. We like to offer what we do best so only quality albums leave our studio."

Other Album Types

As for selling non-wedding albums, the Sallees stress that you need to show finished products from portrait sessions

to sell them. Before previewing a portrait session, the Sallees tell the client all of their options for ordering. After they view their images and fall in love with quite a few, selling an album is easy—it's a way to get more of the images they love without having to purchase a ton of individual prints. "We sell albums for any portrait sessions we offer," shares DeEtte. "We also sell quite a few engagement and bridal albums because clients love our style of design."

Final Thoughts

The Sallees say, "If you don't absolutely *love* being a wedding photographer, don't do it. There are enough cranky wedding photographers out there, so find a new line of photography! When that day comes for us we will take our own advice—we don't want to ruin anyone's wedding because we are burnt out!"

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Susan and Stewart Powers

www.powersphotography.com

Stewart and Susan Powers went to high school together, and Stewart actually became a photographer by raising his hand when a high school teacher asked, "Who wants to be a photographer?" He was picked from a bevy of raised hands in class to volunteer for the school's yearbook staff—in spite of having no camera or experience. According to Susan, "That teacher changed his life." Friends since high school, Stewart actually made his very first wedding photograph of Susan at her first wedding!

Today, both Stewart and Susan are Master Photographers through PPA. In addition, Stewart is a fellow of the American Society of Photographers. The list of awards the Powers have garnered for their album work is also extremely impressive; they earned WPPI's Grand Album award three separate times, PPA's Top Five accolade twice, nine Loan Collection prints, and a number of Fuji Masterpiece and Kodak Gallery Awards, as well.

At the Wedding

The Powers capture events as a team. Stewart captures 60 percent of the images with Susan shooting the balance and coordinating the overall photography at the event. Using a variety of digital camera equipment, including a Nikon D2x and D200 as well as Fuji's S5 Pro, they often capture RAW files plus JPEGs for weddings that will have a slide show at the reception. "This is presented as a surprise gift for the bride—it's not sold or mentioned prior to the wedding," says Susan. "After all, there are sometimes events where you just physically can't do it and we wouldn't want to disappoint the couple." For this show, the Powers set up a laptop with images from earlier in the day on the gift table. When asked about the response to the slide show, Susan replies, "It's one of the best advertising tools in the whole wide world!"

"When creating samples for the studio, make a book so magnificent that you think no one would ever buy it."

The Powers also make a point of using a wide range of lenses. "The thing that separates true professionals from their competitors is that they are using everything possible to set themselves apart. We will use ultra-wides, to fisheyes, to a 500mm mirror lens at almost every wedding," says Susan.

Workflow

Once images are back to the studio, the staff downloads the memory cards. They keep images from each camera separate, because their colors are slightly different. This prevents erroneous blanket processing of the images. After downloading, the images are placed on a RAID server then burned to archival DVDs. Four copies are made, with one set of DVDs kept off-site for safety.

The images are processed and catalogued using iView-Media Pro software. The images are then viewed collectively and rated. After this initial processing, the best fifteen to fifty images (depending upon the size of the album to be created) will be processed to create what the Powers call "Masters." Included in this process are toning, cross-processing, black & white conversion, and other effects—in short, the full spectrum of artistic processing. What is not mastered at this point is the smoothing of skin. That is completed after an image has been selected for the album.

Proofing

Next it's time to create the proof products. The first, which the Powers call a digital portfolio, is a hardcover book, with a beautiful photo slipcover, that is put together by their lab, Natural Color lab. Then CDs are created with Lightning software from Firehand. According

to Susan, the software was designed for law enforcement for organizing mug shots. "It is one of the most amazing products," she says. "You can zoom in on the image up to 300 percent, but clients can't copy or print from the disc." One more process for proofing is online viewing from www.morephotos.com, a system that is seamlessly integrated into the Powers' own web site. This is used for out-of-town clients. "I'm absolutely thrilled," exclaims Susan. "The site even has a magnifying glass to see faces—this is accomplished by uploading two sizes of files."

Clients can also order any variation of slide shows on CD or DVD. This is supplied to help the clients order and is used as a sales tool. They pop in the CD or DVD to see the images enlarged on their television screen, then keep their proof book open and add PostIt notes to the image selections. The fact that there is a visual marker of what image was selected has helped eliminate the potential transposition of image numbers by both the client and the staff. Notes about retouching or cropping are also added to the PostIts. This has allowed the Powers to go from "some stupid number mistake" with almost every album to no mistakes at all. The digital portfolio is re-

A visual marker of what image was selected has helped eliminate the potential transposition of image numbers.

turned to the client after the selections for the album have been pulled from the files.

When clients pick up the original proof materials Stewart and Susan present a slide show on a 61-inch screen with music. They present the client with a gift basket including champaign, cheese, and other "cool stuff" to say thank you to the bride and groom because the Powers are aware that the client had a choice of photographer.

Album Design and Production

The Powers allow clients to select the images for their albums. Susan says this is because, "I would want to pick them if I was a client. That said, if the client wants us to pick the images, we are also happy to do that."

Powers Photography offers four different styles of albums: the Pictobook folded-page 12x12-inch; the Leather Craftsmen 3500-series flush-mount book in the 10x14-inch size; the Leather Craftsman 800-series 10x10-inch book with linen hinge; and an Art Leather slip-in book.

The Art Leather books are designed using Studio-Master Pro (no longer available or supported by Fuji) to create the pages via a drag-and-drop process directly into templates. All other albums are designed using Lumapix Photofusion software. This is available for PC only, but Susan says she's gotten many Mac users to add Windows just to run this software—it's *that* strong for designing albums. Photofusion includes many time-saving features, such as being able to change the drop shadows or borders on all your images simultaneously. You can also render the files in multiple sizes so a smaller version is uploaded for the client to review.

"Don't allow the customer in the studio during the album design process. Do not, *do not ever*, do that," warns Susan. "You will end up spending too much time with them." The Powers allow seven changes per volume

Half of the Powers' books are designed with seventy sides or more and extend to a second volume after thirty-five sides.

and charge for any changes beyond that. Half of the Powers' books are designed with seventy sides or more and extend to a second volume after thirty-five sides.

Pricing

The Powers smallest collection of services starts at $3,400 and includes six hours of coverage and their smallest album. Unlimited coverage and up to three volumes of Leather Craftsmen products comes in at $12,000 and goes to $15,000 including the Pictobook albums.

"Upselling after the wedding depends on the client," Susan says. "I have some clients that just don't have the money and it would be a grave disservice to try and up-

sell to them. On the other hand, we have long-term clients who, if they like the album, don't care about the price. I'm thoughtful about it. I don't want to force people to do anything."

Marketing

Referrals are a very important part of the Power's wedding business. In order to stimulate that even more, Susan and Stewart recently started a referral campaign. Brides receive 5x7-inch gift prints in beautiful vellum envelopes that the couple can hand out to possible wedding referrals. These read, "Return this card when you choose Powers Photography and receive a 16x20-inch wall portrait from your wedding as a gift from us." When a referral from the couple results in a wedding booking, the referring couple also receives a free 16x20-inch print. This is a great way to thank their current clients for making those critical referrals.

Testimonials are also a very important part of promoting any photography business—especially wedding

photography. In order to encourage their brides to write a testimonial, the Powers offer a free 11x14-inch print in exchange. The testimonials are then used in marketing materials and on the studio's web site. When *you* tell people you are wonderful, that's one thing; when *your clients* say you are wonderful, that is much more powerful.

Other Album Types

"Albums are powerful stories," says Susan. "We do all types of albums." They were once called upon to document the putting-down of a revered family horse, and Susan recalls the owner with tears in her eyes saying, "They'll have to pry this album out of my cold dead hands." The Powers also photograph people's passions. That led to a first-place PPA event album about a man's love of fireworks. Susan documented how the Fourth of July fireworks were set off on a barge.

Albums for the engagement sessions have their own line at the Powers' studio and are sold by showing a really nice display. The album can even be created to match the couple's wedding album.

Another big seller is the guest book, which is designed by the Powers' in-house graphic designer for a presentation that is absolutely beautiful. For this, the prints are presented in an I-Mount book.

Final Thoughts

Asked for a last piece of advice for professional photographers, Susan borrows the words of Steven Covey: begin with the end in mind. "When creating samples for the studio, make a book so magnificent that you think no one would ever buy it," she says. "Photograph every wedding like it was going to be a competition album. You have to show the biggest, best most outrageous product that you can. Clients may buy a step or two down but it will be more than if they hadn't seen the higher-end books." When the Powers first started, they photographed every wedding like it was going to be the end-all event—even if the client only bought the smallest package. "If we needed to give the couple time that wasn't included to get the better photos, that's what we did," concludes Susan. As a result, they had great marketing products from the very start—making it a little easier to gradually sign bigger and bigger events.

Testimonials are a very important part of promoting any photography business—especially wedding photography.

APPENDIX ONE

Album Design Overview

There are many different album types you can supply for your customers. Some albums are labor intensive on your part; others are not at all. You need to determine what type of market you are going after and find the product that will serve your needs as well as those of your market. The following paragraphs outline some of the factors involved with producing the various types of books.

Covers

For all albums you need to order a cover. If you are using a slip-in book with no personalization, you can keep these in stock in your studio. Most album companies will create a custom die with your studio logo for imprint in the front inside-cover of the book. Some companies will charge you a one-time fee or will include the creation of the custom die for placing a minimum order.

If you wish to personalize each cover, you will need to order them individually. Customizing can include imprinting the names of the bride and groom and the date of the wedding or other text. This can be gilded in a variety of colors or even branded. Make sure you have the couple sign off on any text that will appear, especially the spelling of their names. This will save you from having to buy a new cover should an error occur.

Your couples will have a choice of cover color, quality of leather, or other type of finish. With higher-end books, additional options—including hubs, tooling, or gilded edges—are available. Covers can also feature an inset photo (on lower-cost books you insert the photo into an opening left in the cover; with higher-end books, the photo is mounted during cover construction). In yet another style, an image is etched into an aluminum cover or mounted under an acrylic cover.

Make sure you have the couple sign off on any text that will appear, especially the spelling of their names.

Slip-In Books

Slip-in books require assembly by the photographer. After deciding on the layout of the album, you choose the size of the book and order the type of cover, frames (pages), and inserts (mats) you need. Each side may have a different-shape insert, and these may be interchanged for variety. For example, the opening page may hold the invitation. The next page may have an 8x10-inch vertical print followed by two 5x7-inch prints, then an 8x10-inch horizontal photograph, followed by a page with four 3.5x5-inch images. The pages are then inserted into the cover. These are the least expensive books to produce, but also the most labor-intensive. Creating them also

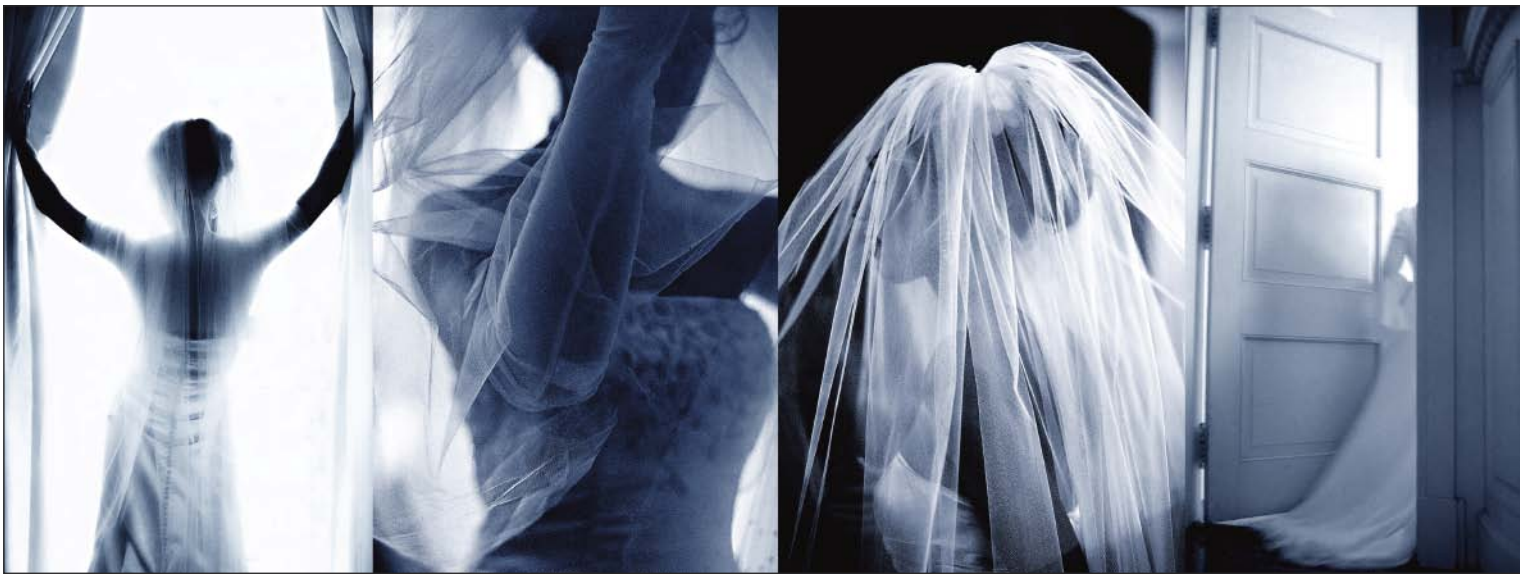
necessitates keeping pages and inserts in stock in your studio.

Some companies that produce this type of album have a system in place where they will assemble the album and ship the finished product. There are companies that build slip-in books in bound fashion. You tell them what pages and mats you would like in the book and it is assembled at the album company. When it arrives in the studio you just insert the prints.

Bound Books

A bound book is a much stronger product. While it costs more, the client notices the higher quality. There are several types of bound books available (in addition to the slip-in style noted above).

Reversible. A reversible bound book allows images to be rotated in a horizontal or vertical position on the page. You can select a color for the frame and another color for the mat. Another color choice is made for the hinge. You lay out the pages the way you like and get an okay from your bride. Then, you have your prints made and send them off with instructions to the bookbinder—usually, the prints are numbered on the back with a soft graphics pencil, like a 4B. (*Note:* Some photographers will also have their clients sign off on the final print quality before sending their prints to the binder. It's less expensive to



Images and design by Marie Labbancz.

Images and design by Kevin and Clare Kubota.

get a print remade before it is glued into the book.) Album companies will texture and spray the prints for protection as part of the production process.

Flush Mount. A very popular bound book is called the flush mount. Images are mounted back to back on card stock flush to the edge of the book. There is no mat. These are extremely popular with digital photographers who prepare their own files and output to an inkjet printer or other device. This allows you to have multiple images on a page, or add text such as vows or poetry to the image. This is a less expensive way to get more images into a book. Some album companies will charge you by the print, however, and this can really add up.

Magazine Style. Magazine-style books are bound and mounted much like flush-mount books, but they are usually printed on an RA-4 process machine, a laser-jet, or

light-jet printer. These books are created from digital files. You can create the page design yourself if you are proficient in Photoshop. Alternately, many of these companies ask that you send the negatives or digital files to their design team, and they will create a finished book. For the do-it-yourselfer who is graphically challenged, there are also companies creating templates for you to use. You will see more of these as more photographers move toward digital capture. Tread carefully here—a little graphic design can go a long way, and this look could become dated. (Remember in the '70s when every album had a double-exposure of a brandy snifter with the bride and groom's faces inside?)

Press Books. Another digital product is a book printed on a CMYK press using regular (as opposed to photographic) paper. There are companies who will scan your negatives or work with your digital files to produce all the layouts and print the book. These are sometimes presented with a book jacket.

Image Boxes

Image boxes are a different type of presentation. While not technically an album, an image box is a great way for your bride to display her wedding images. All the choices available for a regular leather album cover are also available for the cover of the image box—type of leather, color, embossing, inset photo, etc. Photos are mounted and matted, then stored in the box. Lower-end boxes are available with slip-in mats. Image boxes can be sold with small easels and can also be marketed with a grouping of metal chop frames so the couple can change out the images on a regular basis.

There are new products and ideas being created every day. Many photographers are creating multimedia presentations with images and music on CD or DVD as a companion piece for their albums. Emotion Media can take care of the production of these slide shows, including royalty-free music—visit www.emotionmedia.com for a free trial of their services. Keep your eyes open for new developments in album design.

Image and design by Bob Coates.

APPENDIX TWO

Album Design Terms

COMPILED BY DAN HAMMEL OF LEATHER CRAFTSMEN

Types of Albums

Book. Created from CMYK digital files, these books are printed on a digital press onto regular (nonphotographic) paper. These books are useful for getting many images into a smaller, lighter album.

Fine-Art library bound. Designed to showcase a single image on a page with a fine, wide border. This mounting style has a museum or art gallery appearance. This is an ideal presentation to showcase a photographer's best work.

Flush library bound. Prints are mounted back-to-back and flush to the edges of a page. There is no mat, frame, or liner around any of the images. Photographic papers, dye sublimation, and inkjet prints work well for this application. Flush-mount books are available in a wide variety of sizes.

Images and design by Michael Ayers.

Images and design by Kevin and Clare Kubota.

Magazine. Created from digital files, these albums contain multiple images and lots of artwork on the pages, which are usually mounted flush style.

Reversible library bound. Images are custom-mounted within a frame and liner. Prints can be vertical or horizontal and the person need not turn the book to view their images. This is a great presentation for varying sizes and multiple images on the same page.

Slip-In. These are manufactured albums that are assembled by the customer. Prints are slipped into the frames as opposed to the custom hand-mounting found in library bound books. This style of book is usually a less expensive presentation.

Cover Design Treatments

Cover inset photo. A flush opening within a cover into which an image may be mounted.

Cover outset photo. Raised frame within a cover where an image may be placed.

Custom die. Metal die created for repeatable pressing into a cover surface, usually made with the photographer's logo.

Images and design by Jeff and Kathleen Hawkins.

Designer leather. Polished leather, the same as that used in saddles.

Distressed leather. A richly textured hide that comes in a natural brown tone.

Euro leather. Soft, non-grained durable leather that shows natural scarring in a hide.

Hubs. Raised bumps on a book spine.

Imprinting. Treatment used for names, monograms, dates, or a personal message on the album cover. This text can match the tooling color. Different fonts are available for imprinting as well as custom dies.

Leather. Cover material available for library bound books. Note that top grain, Euro, and lizard are spray dyed, while rustique, distressed, and designer leathers are vat-dyed.

Lizard leather. Top-grain cowhide with a lizard-skin imprint pressed into the hide.

Other materials. Covers may also be made of paper, cloth, glass, acrylic, metal, or wood.

Rustique leather. Fine imported leather from Europe that shows natural scarring in the hide.

Spine. Side of the book that the pages are attached to. Custom books showcase a hand-rounded, hand-hammered spine.

Tooling. Lines that appear on a cover to frame the presentation. Lines can also be included on the book's spine. These lines can be gold, silver, black, and either branded or embossed. Also available with high-end books is 22K gold tooling.

Top-grain cowhide. Has graining that hides most imperfections in leather hides.

Other Book Parts

Composite page. Photos inset within another print. Usually a small image inset into an 8x10- or 10x10-inch photo. Can be square, circular, oval, or rectangular.

Endpaper. The lining on the inside of a book cover. Most linings have a moiré pattern and contrast with the cover color. Handmade endpaper is used in more expensive, custom presentations.

Frame. The actual page. These are available in a wide variety of colors.

Gilding. The color around the outside edge of a page. The gilding color is seen when the book is closed. Gilding is available in gold, silver, black, and no gild. 22K gold can be used in higher-end books.

Head string. A piece of woven cloth that conceals the top and bottom of the binding connections.

Hinge. Linen tape that holds the pages in an album. These are available in colors that complement the frame colors.

Invitation page. Blank frame placed at the front of an album to showcase the invitation to the special event. This makes a great title or opening page for any presentation.

Liner. Margins within a frame. These are also available in many colors. May match or contrast with the frame color.

Logo page. Parchment pages that a studio imprint or logo can be stamped upon, as opposed to being stamped upon the inside cover.

Page marker. Satin braided ribbons used to mark a viewer's place in a book. Page markers are used in higher-end albums and are seen most often in first editions, family Bibles, and dictionaries.

Panorama. A full-bleed image spread across two facing pages.

Panorama, half. Image mounted flush across one page.

Panorama, three-quarter. Image mounted across one-and-a-half facing pages.

Slipcase. Protective case for books. Allows upright vertical storage. Most slipcases are covered in the same fine leathers as the album presentation.

Images and design by Susan and Stewart Powers.

Album Manufacturers and Suppliers

There are many different album manufacturers and suppliers to choose from. There are always new products on the market. Every effort was made to ensure that the information on this list is current and as complete as possible.

Wedding Album Manufacturers

Album Crafters
2693 West 76th Street, Hialeah, FL 33016
(800) 338-7213
info@albumcrafters.com; www.albumcrafters.com

Album Designer Network
3000 Dundee Road, Suite 305, Northbrook, IL 60062
(800) 213-7691; (847) 513-6416
www.theadn.com

Album Printer Inc.
110 Chestnut Ridge Road, #395, Montvale, NJ 07645
(201) 307-9525
www.albumprintersofware.com
salesamerica@albumprinter.com

Album X Corporation
21 Grace Church Street, Port Chester, NY 10573
(914) 939-6878, fax (914) 939-5874
www.thebookalbum.com; albumx@aol.com

Albums Australia Pty. Ltd.
993 North Road, Unit 17, Murrumbeena
Victoria 3163, Australia
+61 3 9563 7099; fax +61 3 9563 7056,
info@albumsaustralia.com.au

Album King, Inc.
20 Kean Street, West Babylon, NY 11704
(866) ALBUM11; (631) 253-9500
fax (631) 253-9502
www.albumking.com

Albums of Love
www.albumoflove.com
mills@albumoflove.com
(877) 925-3869 (XALBUMX)

American Color Imaging
715 East 18th Street, Cedar Falls, IA 50613
(800) 728-2722; www.acilab.com

Amore Albums
10831 Hickory Lane, Highlands Ranch, CO 80126
(866) 559-8186
www.amorealbums.com; info@amorealbums.com

Artefact
4580 West Hacienda Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89118
(866) 900-9878
www.artefactstudio.com; info@artefactstudio.com

Art Leather
600 W. John Street, Suite 100
Hicksville, NY 11801-1035
(888) 252-5286; fax (800) 882-5286
www.artleather.com; jmarello@myfotopro.com

Art Z
(800) 789-6503; (406) 586-8720; fax (406) 586-8732
artzproducts.com; info@artzproducts.com

Asukabook USA
62910 O.B. Riley Road, Suite 310, Bend, OR 97701
(866) 330-1530; (541) 330-1530; fax (541) 330-5540
www.asukabook.com; info@asukabook.com

Blurb Inc.
580 California Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, CA 94104
www.blurb.com

Bon Match Albums
#102-9770 196A Street
Langley, BC, V1M2X5, Canada
(888) 583-1533; fax (604) 513-1836
www.bonmatchalbum.com

BWC Photo Imaging
4930 Maple Avenue, Dallas, TX 75235
(800) 445-0264; (214) 528-4200
www.bwc.net; info@bwc.net

Candid 2000
2525 N. Partnership Boulevard
Springfield, MO 65803
(888) 321-4665; fax (417) 831-6042
www.tuscanyalbums.com; custserve@candid2000.com

Capri Album Company, Inc.
510 South Fulton Avenue
Mount Vernon, NY 10550-2093
(800) 666-6653; (914) 776-6000
fax (800) 791-3434; fax (914) 776-6099
www.caprialbum.com; info@caprialbum.com

CHL Albums
25912 Pueblo Drive, Valencia, CA 91335
www.chlalbum.com; service@chlalbum.com
(818) 322-4708;

Classic Album, LLC
343 Lorimer Street, Brooklyn, NY 11206
(800) 799-1931; (718) 388-2818
fax (718) 388-0214
www.classicalbum.com

Clover Album
www.cloveralbum.com
(800) 899-7670

Color & Art
No. 347 Jinshan Road, Sanmin District
Kaohsiung, Taiwan
886-7-3101100; fax 886-7-3100602
www.colorart-album.com.tw
marketing@romance-album.com.tw

Craftpix
1 North Tyson Avenue, Floral Park, NY 11001
(917) 576-7810; (516) 284-1214
www.craftpix.com; info@craftpix.com

Cypress Fine Handmade Albums & Boxes
315 West Cerritos Avenue, Glendale, CA 91204
(818) 551-0023; fax (818) 551-0028
www.cypressalbums.com; info@cypressalbums.com

D & B Photo Albums
962 Main Street, Dubuque, IA 52001
(866) 582-6711; (563) 582-6711
fax (563) 582-6712
www.dbphotoalbums.com; info@dbphotoalbums.com

Daisy Arts
225 Fifth Avenue, Suite 415, New York, NY 10010
(212) 481-6245
www.daisyarts.com; sales@daisyarts.com
1312 Abbot Kinney Boulevard, Venice, CA 90291
(310) 396-8463; fax (310) 399-2002
venice@daisyarts.com

Dia Creations Inc.
1305 Marie Victorin, Suite 700, Saint-Bruno
Québec, Canada J3V 6B7
(866) 441-9777; (450) 441-9777
fax (450) 461-3105
creationsdia@qc.aira.com

Digilab Prints
1 North Tyson Avenue, Floral Park, NY 11001
(718) 701-5300; fax (516) 684-9518
www.digilabprints.com; info@digilabprints.com

Digilabs
1032 Elwell Court, Suite 245, Palo Alto, CA 94303
(866) 344-4522; (650) 390-9749; fax (650) 390-9754
www.digilabs.com

Dream Garden Album
11401 Valley Boulevard, Suite 209
El Monte, CA 91731
(626) 443-7222; fax (626) 443-7287
www.dreamgardenalbum.com
dreamgardenalbum@yahoo.com

The Edge Photo Imaging
34 Bedford Street, Collingwood 3066, Australia
(03) 9416-3399; fax (03) 9416-3200
www.theedgephoto.com.au
niels@theedgephoto.com.au

Finao
8104 Bethel Church Road, Saline, MI 48176
(888) 346-2687; fax (888) 593-6546
www.finaoonline.com; info@finaoonline.com

Forbeyon
901 Regal Row, Dallas, TX 75247
(972) 220-1480; fax (866) 212-5034
www.forbeyon.com; info@forbeyon.com

GP Albums
4045 North Rockwell Street, Chicago, IL 60618-3797
(800) 888-1934; (773) 463-2424
fax (800) GEN-PROD; fax (773) 463-3028
www.gpalbums.com; inquiry@gpalbums.com

GraphiStudio
960 Inwood Avenue, North Oakdale, MN 55128
(866) 472-7441; fax (413) 403-8316
www.graphistudio.com; sales@graphistudio.com

HPI Holson Professional
410 Gossett Road, Spartanburg, SC 29307
(800) 634-7980; (864) 579-5501; fax (800) 634-7984

Jorgensen Albums
699 Marshall Road, Malaga, Western Australia 6944
+61 8 9249 5644; fax +61 8 9249 5567
www.jorgensenalbums.com
sales@jorgensenalbums.com

Kambara USA, Inc.
18355 SW Teton Avenue, P. O. Box 747
Tualatin, OR 97062
(503) 692-9818; fax (503) 692-7929
www.kambara.com; kambara@ Kambara.com

Laguna Albums
2307 Laguna Canyon Road, #5
Laguna Beach, CA 92651
(949) 494-8997; (877) 234-4933
www.lagunalabums.com

La Vie
1316 Third Street, #109, Santa Monica, CA 90401
(877) 505-7277; (310) 395-4000
www.la-viealbum.com; info@la-viealbum.com

Leather Album Designs
1711 Cudaback Avenue, PMB 835
Niagara Falls, NY 14303
(905) 664-5500; (800) 263-6892
fax (905) 664-3550
www.leather-album-designs.com

Leather Craftsmen Inc. East
51 Carolyn Blvd., Farmingdale, NY 11735
(800) 275-2463; (631) 752-9000; fax (631) 751-9220
www.leathercraftsmen.com
customerservice@leathercraftsmen.com

Leather Craftsmen Inc. West
2113 South Yale Street, Santa Ana, CA 92704
(800) 366-2828; (714) 429-9763; fax (714) 429-9768
www.leathercraftsmen.com
customerservice@leathercraftsmen.com

Memory Link
95 Seaview Boulevard, #103
Port Washington, NY 11050
(516) 625-9600; fax (516) 625-3690
www.albumml.com; mknymemory@yahoo.com

Nichols Photo Lab
3265 South 1100 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84106
(801) 486-3053; (800) 824-5358
www.nicholsphotolab.com

PCL West
16435 Ishida Avenue, Gardena, CA 90248
(866) 725-9378
www.pclwest.com; customerservice@pclwest.com

The Photo Album Shop
P. O. Box 244, Hornsby, NSW 1630, Australia
+61-2-9457-7322; fax+61-2-9457-7344
service@photoalbumshop.com.au

Photo Book Press
2836 Lyndale Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55408
(612) 874-0244
www.photobookpress.com

Photo Mounts and Albums
21 Kensal Street, Moorooka, QLD, 4105, Australia
+61 73892 5591
www.photomounts.com.au
lorraine@photomounts.com.au

PictoBooks
11880 Coakley Circle, Rockville, MD 20852
(888) 697-4286; (301) 231-7050; fax (301) 231-8735
www.pictobooks.com; info@pictobooks.com

Queensberry Leather, Ltd.
3-5/13a Waikaukau Road, Glen Eden
Aukland, New Zeland
+64-9-813-9160; fax +64-9-813 9170
www.queensberry.com

Renaissance Albums
21 Grace Church Street, Port Chester, NY 10573
(914) 939-6878; fax (914) 939-5874
www.renaissancealbums.com
mail@.renaissancealbums.com

Rieger Professional Imaging
22516 Gateway Center Drive, Suite 300
Clarksburg, MD 20871
(800) 948-5320; fax (301) 515-4054
www.riegerpro.com; rep@riegerpro.com

Sandis Leather Album Mfg. Co.
34-401 Magnetic Drive
Toronto, Ontario, M3J 3H9, Canada
(800) 899-7670; (416) 787-2171; fax (416) 787-7875
www.sandisalbum.com; info@sandisalbum.com

7 Cubed Books
1333 E. Orange Thorpe Avenue, Fullerton, CA 92831
(949) 701-0045
www.7cubedbooks.com; brian@inlightphoto.com

Shared Ink, LLC
P. O. Box 85, Duvall, WA 98019; (425) 844-8920
www.siphotographer.com; support@sharedink.com

Showoff Albums, USA
12832 Garden Grove Boulevard, Suite D
Garden Grove, CA 92843
(714) 537-3737; fax (714) 537-3732
www.showoffalbumsusa.com
showoffalbums@yaho.com

Spicer Hallfield
Philip Mauer Photomount
25652 Nickel Place, Hayward, CA 94545
(800) 321-3686; (510) 780-0500; fax (510) 780-0511
www.philipmauer.com; mauerphoto@aol.com

White Glove First Edition Books
8092 Warner Avenue, Huntington Beach, CA 92647
(714) 841-6900; fax (714) 841-9567
www.wgbooks.com; wgbooks@wgbooks.com

White Wedding Album
1091 Calcot Place, #212, Oakland, CA 94606
(800) 886-1707
www.whiteweddingalbum.com
info@whiteweddingalbum.com

Zoho Design
832 Jury Court, #4, San Jose, CA 95112
(877) 742-2000
www.zohodesign.com; info@zohodesign.com

Zookbinders, Inc.
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INDEX

A

Advertising, 39, 49, 55–57, 91
Actions, 12, 62, 69, 97
Adobe Bridge, 40
Adobe InDesign, 12
Adobe Lightroom, 62
Adobe Photoshop, 9, 12, 33, 34, 64, 69, 72–73, 82, 84, 98
Adobe Premiere, 44
Adobe Reader, 12
Album covers, 110
Album design, 9, 11–12, 21–23, 29, 33–34, 41, 46, 52, 59–61, 64–65, 72–73, 78–79, 88, 98–101, 106–7
Album Designer Network (ADN), 53–54
Album manufacturers, 118–21
Album presentation, 12, 29, 54, 66–67, 95
Album production, 6–9, 13–15, 23, 29, 34–35, 41, 47, 52–54, 65–67, 88, 95, 101, 106–7
Album suppliers, 121–22
Album types, 13–15, 67–68, 101–2, 109
Apple Aperture, 12, 86, 88
Artistic Actions, 62
Art Leather, 41, 106
Assistants, working with, 31–33
Asukabook, 65–66, 67
AutoAlbum, 9, 64
Ayers, Michael, 49–54

B

Bound albums, 111–13
Bridal shows, 38–39
Buissink, Joe, 55–61

C

Capris, 47
Coates, Bob, 30–35
Composite pages, 116
Consultations, 30, 38, 42–44, 49–52, 75–76, 82–84, 91–92
Covers, 110, 115–6
Custom dies, 116
Customer service, 17–18, 24–25, 75–76, 82–84, 91–92
Cypress, 71

D

Digital photography, 10

E

Editorial photography, 74
E-mail communications, 39, 91
Emotion Media, 33, 40
Endpapers, 116
Engagement portraits, 18, 42–44, 68, 72, 76, 92–93, 102

F

Film photography, 10
Firehand Lightning, 104
Flash Five, 84
Flush-mount albums, 112, 114
Fred Marcus Studios, 24–29
Fuji StudioMaster Pro, 106

G

Gilding, 116
GP Albums, 53
GraphiStudio, 23, 35, 59, 61, 71
Gross National Product (GNP), 88
Guest books, 68, 72, 86, 109

H

Hawkins, Jeff and Kathleen, 36–41
Head string, 116

I

iDVD, 63
Image archives, 95
Image boxes, 86–87, 113
Image editing, 10–11
I-Mount, 109
Imprinting, 116
Invitation pages, 117
iView Media, 40, 78, 87, 104

J

John Garner Bookcrafts, 23, 47, 86, 88
Jorgensen, 71

K

Kambara USA, 101
Kubota, Kevin and Clare, 62–68

L

Labbancz, Marie, 69–74
Leather Craftsmen, 8, 29, 34, 41, 59, 60, 65, 67, 71, 72, 95, 106
Library-bound album, 114
Logo page, 127
Lumapix Photofusion, 106
Luxury Bound, 95

M

Magazine-style albums, 112–13, 115
Marcus, Andy and Brian, 24–29
Maring, Charles and Jennifer, 82–88
Marketing, 17–18, 24–25, 30, 36, 44, 49, 55–57, 65–67, 73, 75, 90, 108–9
Morephotos, 45, 105
Multimedia presentations, 84

P

Page Gallery, 9, 23, 46
Page markers, 117
Panoramas, 117
Parent albums, 15–16, 66, 67, 86
PDFs, 34, 64–65
Perfect Wedding Guide, 39
Photo Junction, 73
Photo Mechanic, 69
Pictobook, 106, 107
Powers, Stewart and Susan, 103–9
Press books, 113, 114
Pricing, 21, 31, 49–52, 57–59, 67, 71–72, 74, 76–78, 85–86, 96, 107–8
Professional Photographers of America (PPA), 9, 10, 35
Proofing, 9, 12, 28, 29, 33, 40–41, 45, 47, 62–63, 71, 78, 87–88, 104–6
ProSelect, 63
Publicist, role of, 57

Q

Queensberry Leather, Ltd., 71

R

Referrals, 36, 49, 55–57, 75, 90, 108–9
Reversible bound albums, 111–12, 115

S

Sales techniques, 15–16, 44, 57–59, 79–81, 92–93, 96
Sallee, JB and DeEtte, 96–102
Sample albums, 47, 52, 59, 73–74
Save-the-date cards, 72
Schembri, Martin, 75–81
Seldex, 79
Shindle, Brian and Judith, 89–95
Sklute, Ken, 42–48
Slipcase, 117
Slip-in albums, 110–11, 115
Software Cinema, 9
Spine, 116
Stock photography, 37
Sudimack, Amanda, 10–16

T

TalaPhoto, 63
Testimonials, 108–9
Timeline sheets, 48
Tooling, 116

V

Vendors, working with, 36, 73–74, 91

W

Web site, marketing with, 37–38
Wedding and Portrait Photographers International (WPPI), 9, 35
Wedding day photography, 19–20, 25–28, 40, 78, 93–94, 96–97, 103
Workflow, 20–21, 33, 40–41, 45, 62–64, 69–71, 78–79, 94–95, 97–98, 103–4

Y

Yervant, 17–23
You Select It (YSI), 9, 79

Z

Zookbinders, 14, 88

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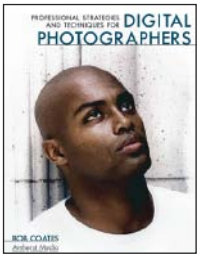

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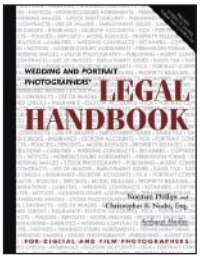

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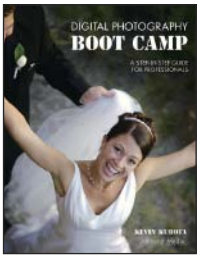

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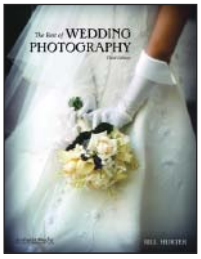

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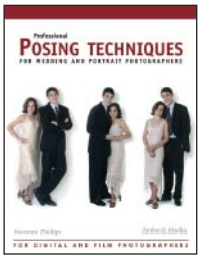

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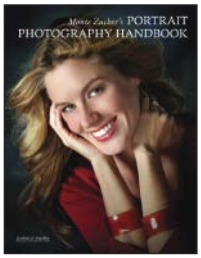

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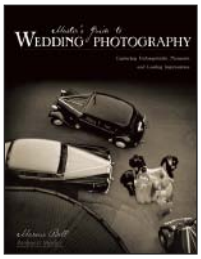

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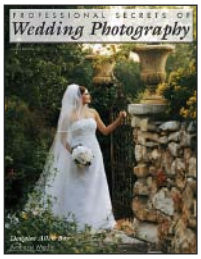

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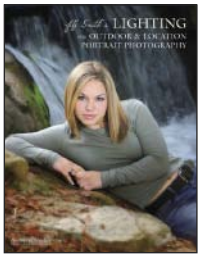

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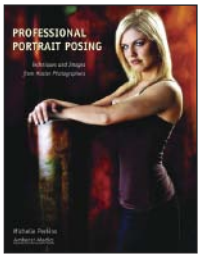

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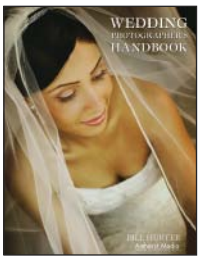

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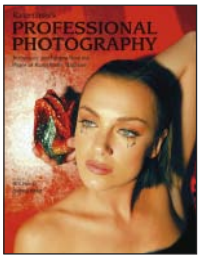

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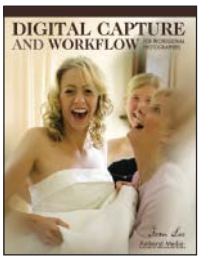

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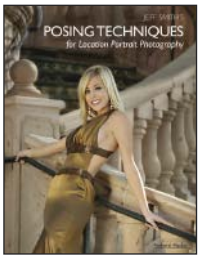

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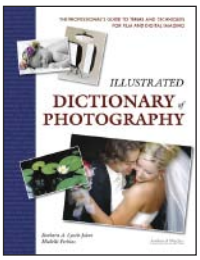

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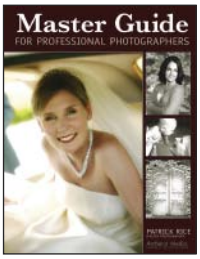

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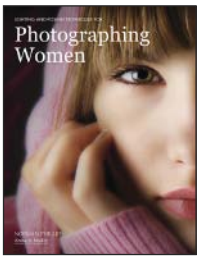

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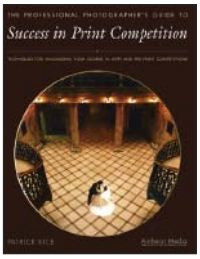

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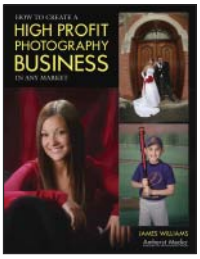

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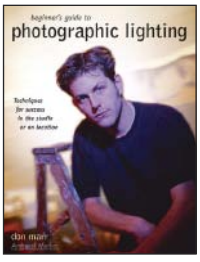

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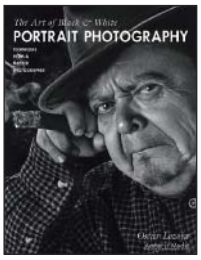

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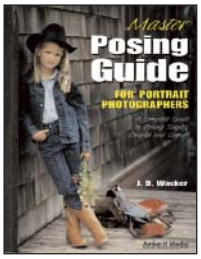

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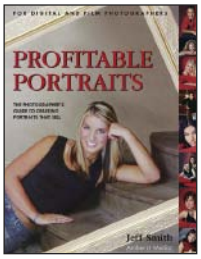

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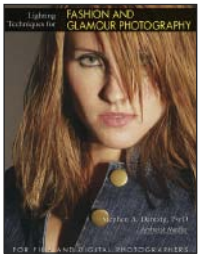

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